

MARLOWE, PART TWO

(a work in progress)

By Simon Bowler Khan

7-29-22

<u>Cast:</u>	<u>Doubling:</u>
Christopher (Kit) Marlowe (20s) - poet, lover, spy	(1)
Archbishop John Whitgift (40s) - head of the Church of England	(2)
Lady Anne Havenhurst (20s) - Whitgift's daughter	(3)
Thomas Walsingham (20s) - nephew of Sir Francis Walsingham	(4)
Sir Francis Walsingham (50s) - Elizabeth's Spy Master	(5)
Robert Poley (30s)- Sir Francis' henchman	(6)
Philip Henslowe (40s) - owner of The Rose Theater (plays <i>Mephistopheles</i> )	(7)
Judith Henslowe (30s) - husband of Philip	(8)
Lord Havenhurst (60s) - head of the Privy Council	(9)
Lill (20s) - a prostitute	(3)
Maunder (40s) - Whitgift's Sergeant	(6)
Eleanor (30s) - tavern owner	(8)
The Collector (male) (20s - 50s) - a body collector	(2)
Thomas Kyd (20s) - a writer	(7)
William Bradley (30's) - a fop	(6)
Andrew Perne (50s) - Chancellor	(5)
Soldier (20s)	(9)
Susan (20s) - a maid	(3)
Various: Crowd 1 and 2, Frizer	
18 characters, 13 male, 5 female. With doubling - 9 actors (6 male, 3 female)	

Running Time: 110 minutes. This play runs quicker than plays of similar length. Time and place: London, England late 1500s

Synopsis: Playwright Christopher Marlowe is the most celebrated writer in England and a member of the School of Atheism, a secret society of intellectuals. His increasingly provocative plays draw the attention of Archbishop Whitgift, who begins a campaign of censorship to destroy the School and Marlowe.

Sets: A tavern (chairs and tables), Whitgift's office (a desk and a crucifix), a bedroom (a four post bed), Marlowe's apartment (one desk, two beds), Rose Theater stage, Rose Theater office (a desk and chair), Durham House (a candelabra and portrait), London street (a doorway and a wall), Parliament corridor (columns and flag), Tower jail cell (manacles and rack), dockside (crates).

Author Bio: Simon produced documentaries for Channel 4 and The World Bank, the mockumentary feature film *'Man of the Year'*, and multiple shows for the BBC, ABC, PBS, Discovery, Bravo, among others. He has written several award-winning plays.

Awards:

Writemovies Play Writing Winner

Reviews:

"Kit Marlowe is sharper, more devious, and more manipulative. He's always the smartest person in the room. The dialogue is strong. The cadences are distinct. The characters build up good rhythms with each other. There's an insatiable appetite for Marlowe and Shakespeare, especially when it's as strong as this one in character, story, and dialogue." WeScreenplay Script Notes

ACT ONE

SCENE ONE

At rise, an empty stage. A man sings...

COLLECTOR (OFF STAGE)

*You gods that guide the ghosts  
And souls, of them that fled,  
Send sobs, send sighs, send grievous groans,  
And strike poor Panthea dead.*

Enter a figure in a black cloak and a macabre beaked mask, wheeling a cart piled high and covered with a blood stained sheet. He wears a black gown with a garland of flowers around his neck. He continues singing..

COLLECTOR

*Abradad, poor Abradad!  
My spirit with thine shall lie.  
Come death, alas, O death most sweet,  
For now I crave to die.*

He stops the cart, rings a bell, and shouts out...

COLLECTOR

Don't let them rot in the streets. Give your loved ones a proper Christian burial. By order of the church, a shilling a corpse. Sixpence for a child.

A thin limp arm blistered with sores falls out from under the sheet. He tucks the limb back under.

COLLECTOR

*(continues singing) No grief is like to mine,  
Which naught but death can 'suage.  
My help is hurt; my weal is woe;  
My rest is ruthless rage.*

He turns to us, the audience, and puts the garland of flowers to his face.

## COLLECTOR

The stench of death hangs in the air, sticks to your throat like mold, as plague spreads through England, the third wave in twenty years. They believed their prayers'd save them, (*laughs*) they never had a chance. Now food is scarce and the winter bites, but we are silent, what with the Spanish War and the church clamping down. Whatever resentments we have, we keep to ourselves. Here in London a few voices rise, namely Kit Marlowe, who in five short years has conquered the London stage, his plays heralded, and his star shines brighter than any writer before him.

Enter Christopher 'Kit' Marlowe (20s), long black hair, blazing eyes, wearing a black and gold thread waistcoat.

## COLLECTOR

Ah, it's the playwright fellow.

## KIT

What monstrosity are you?

## COLLECTOR

No monster, sir, just a man.

## KIT

Men are often monsters behind their masking smiles.

## COLLECTOR

Aye, sir, there's no animal as bad, for only we can sin.

## KIT

(*skeptical*) So they say.

## COLLECTOR

You don't believe it?

## KIT

I believe what I can see, not what I'm told.

The Collector takes the mask off. He is so weather beaten and ragged it's hard to tell how old he is.

## KIT

(*recognizes*) I know you. The collector.

COLLECTOR

Now you're the big man of the London stage. What's it, four plays?

KIT

*(proudly)* Five.

COLLECTOR

I take my hat off to you. *(mimics tipping his hat)* Tis a string of pearls you've written.

KIT

I have my detractors.

COLLECTOR

Ah, yes, your 'controversies', but personally, I love *Tamburlaine*, one and two, and *Dido*, and *The Massacre*, I saw that one several times over.

KIT

Thank you, you're very kind.

COLLECTOR

You're a voice of reason in a sea of madness, but perhaps you should leave London.

KIT

Why so?

COLLECTOR

Two hundred dead, a thousand infected, and it'll be twice more by the full moon.

KIT

The plague again?

COLLECTOR

Aye, sir, another wave.

KIT

God in heaven!

COLLECTOR

Seems to me God's given up.

KIT

You're an interesting man. Do have you no greater ambition than to collect the dead?

COLLECTOR

I worked in an office once.

KIT

But?

COLLECTOR

I didn't like being boxed in, and now my floor is the fields, my ceiling the sky, and my walls the trees.

KIT

So you shun the world of Man?

COLLECTOR

I find it a confusion of opinions.

KIT

Aye, we have become a tower of Babel.

COLLECTOR

Speaking of which, have you seen this? *(gives Kit a pamphlet)*

KIT

*(reads)* "God is dead... The church moribund.... religion outmoded." *(worried)* Where did you find it?

COLLECTOR

Plastered on the church walls in Covent Garden. Look at the bottom.

KIT

*(reads)* Signed 'Tamburlaine'.

COLLECTOR

Yours?

KIT

Of course not, t'would be suicide. Who posted it?

COLLECTOR

I didn't see, but Maunder, the Bishop's man, was asking questions.

KIT

What kind of questions?

COLLECTOR

About you?

KIT

What was his inquiry?

COLLECTOR

*(embarrassed)* About, well, your reputation for whores and wine and such.

KIT

*(worried)* What did you say?

COLLECTOR

That I don't know you, but from what I saw, you seemed a decent fellow.

KIT

I'll not be intimidated by men in frocks.

COLLECTOR

He's not to be messed with.

KIT

And neither am I. "Blessed are those who are persecuted because righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom."

COLLECTOR

The Gospel of Matthew.

KIT

You know you bible.

COLLECTOR

I try. Well, I'll leave you to your "business", I got bodies to collect.



KIT

Look after yourself.

COLLECTOR

You too, sir, and keep an eye open on your enemies, but remember that those you hold close are most dangerous.

KIT

Thank you, sirrah. *(he exits)*

The Collector rings a bell, wheels his cart off stage, and calls out...

COLLECTOR

By order of the church. A shilling a corpse. Don't let 'em rot. We'll give 'em a proper Christian burial. Sixpence for a child.

## SCENE TWO

A tavern, worn tables and chairs. Scraggy Tom Kyd (20s), is at one of the tables with a mug of beer, a quill, and an ink bottle, feverishly writing in a notebook. A buxom bar lady, Eleanor (30s), cleans glasses and sings *Greensleeves*...

ELEANOR

*Alas, my love, you do me wrong,  
To cast me off discourteously...*

She lifts Kyd's arm, who is absorbed in his writing, and wipes the table.

ELEANOR

*(sings) For I have loved you well and long,  
Delighting in your company.  
(to Kyd) Are you gonna pay for that? (re: his drink)*

KYD

I'm waiting for my friend.

ELEANOR

*(carries on cleaning) (sings) Your vows you've broken, like my heart  
Oh, why did you so enrapture me?  
Now I remain in a world apart...*

Enter Marlowe with Thomas Walsingham (20s), poised, a little aloof, and well dressed.

KIT/ELEANOR (TOGETHER)

*(joins in with her) ... But my heart remains in captivity.*

KIT

The euphony of your voice shames the sweet dulcimer.

ELEANOR

Kit Marlowe, your silver tongue flatters, but it won't get you free beer if that's what you're fishing for.

KIT

I wouldn't dream of it.

ELEANOR

*(nods to Thomas) My Lord Walsingham.*

THOMAS

Eleanor.

KIT

Worry not, fair maiden. *(approaches her, looks down into her cleavage)* What's this I spy?

ELEANOR

*(looks down) What?*

With a sleight of hand, he appears to pull a coin from her bosom.

KIT

A half guinea. That should cover my chit.

ELEANOR

*(laughs, takes the coin)* Get away with you and your stage tricks, I got work to do.

KIT

Aye, tis an unjust world where the poor sweat, while the rich idle, eh, Thomas?

THOMAS

If the world were not such, then who'd be your patron?

KIT

Ah yes, the patron and the ever-beholden writer. Will it ever change?

THOMAS

Your view's too simple.

KIT

*(skeptical)* Is it though? For what separates one man from another but title and wealth?

ELEANOR

So what will it be?

KIT

Two of your finest brandy.

ELEANOR

And him? *(re: Kyd)*

KIT

Make it three.

KYD

I owe you.

KIT

When you've sold your *Hamlet*, you can buy.

Enter William Bradley (30s), a staggering drunken fop dressed in soft velvet.

BRADLEY

Eleanor.

ELEANOR

She's not ready yet, William.

BRADLEY

Then bring me ale. (*flops down at a table*)

ELEANOR

I'll be with you in a minute.

She exits.

KIT

(*to Thomas*) You were saying that Sir Walter Raleigh, Sir Francis Bacon, Thomas Harriot, and Lord Northumberland are afraid of me?

THOMAS

Not afraid as such, but...

KIT

Then what?

THOMAS

(*worried*) You disturb.

KIT

That's the point.

THOMAS

And so you stand out like a nail.

KIT

If what came before disturbs, my next play shall shock.

THOMAS

There's a line, Kit, which you too eagerly cross.

KIT

A writer must stand apart or he's merely a parrot.

THOMAS

Your *Edward the Second* portrayed the king as a lover of men for God's sake.

KIT

Because, according to Holinshead, he was.

THOMAS

Holinshead condemns him for it, but you're sympathetic. (*urging*) Just be discreet.

KIT

Fuck discretion. It's time we stop fearing sanctimonious priests and their superstitions.

THOMAS

Kit, listen to me, it's serious. The bishop's regained Her Majesty's favor.

KIT

Then the queen's a fool.

THOMAS

(*looks around nervous*) Sssh! Keep your voice down.

KIT

*Ars non habet inimicum nisi ignorantia.*

THOMAS

My Latin's rusty.

KYD

(*translates*) "Art has no enemy except ignorance".

THOMAS

It's your words off stage that are dangerous.

KIT

Like?

THOMAS

(*mimics Marlowe*) "The Pope's an asshole through which God shits." (*Marlowe laughs*)  
It's not funny.

They take a seat at the table with Kyd, who is still writing intently.

KIT

*(to Kyd)* Tom, meet the honorable Lord Walsingham.

KYD

*(to Thomas)* Kit *(stutters)* t... talks of you often.

THOMAS

Good things I trust?

KYD

Oh, yes, all good. *(laughs cynically)* *(puts his hand out to shake)*

THOMAS

I don't shake hands.

KYD

Why not?

THOMAS

Tis a theory I have about the plague. And you are?

KYD

*(stutters)* T...Thomas Kyd.

KIT

My roommate, and he's looking for a patron, Thomas.

THOMAS

*(to Kyd)* Your *Spanish Tragedy* was enthralling, and I particularly liked the play-within-a-play used to trap the murderer. Very clever.

KYD

Thank you, my lord. Stories of betrayal are much in vogue now.

THOMAS

I think it's the best new play since...

KIT

*Tamburlaine.*

THOMAS

*(sarcastic)* Obviously not to your Homeric standards.

KIT

Yes, well, mine aren't just plot, they have poetry.

KYD

Iambic-fucking-pen... *(stutters)* t... tameter!

Bradley, at another table, calls over...

BRADLEY

Tamburlaine is over-stuffed, paganistic, and godless. It should be banned.

KIT

*(stands up)* Who are you?

KYD

*(to Marlowe)* Don't bother, he's not worth the *(stutters)* t... trouble. *(pulls Marlowe back down)*

Eleanor approaches Bradley with a beer.

ELEANOR

Here you are, Mister Bradley.

BRADLEY

Where's Lill?

ELEANOR

She'll be down in a minute.

BRADLEY

It's not professional to keep a gentleman waiting.

ELEANOR

Don't worry, she'll make it up to you, she's a very imaginative girl. *(mimics giving fellatio)*

Bradley smiles lasciviously and glugs his beer. At the other table, Eleanor brings their drinks.

ELEANOR

There you are boys.

KIT

*(takes a sip)* Mmm, nice warm ale.

THOMAS

*(stands up)* I must go.

KIT

Already? We just arrived. You're always running off mysteriously.

THOMAS

Her Majesty's conference.

KIT

Well then if you must go, send her my regards.

THOMAS

*(ironic)* Ha. Ha. I'll see you anon.

Thomas and Marlowe hug and KISS. Kyd shakes his head and looks away.

KIT

*(aside)* Trust me, Thomas, I can be discreet.

THOMAS

*(aside)* Try. *(to Kyd)* A pleasure to meet you Tom. Perhaps I could commission your next play?

KYD

I'd be honored, my lord.

Thomas exits. Kyd scowls.

KIT

*(to Kyd)* You disapprove?

KYD

His wealth comes from his family.

KIT

And?



KYD

A man who's way is paved cannot be (*stutters*) t... trusted.

KIT

We may be from humble backgrounds, but we must embrace our success and those that come with it, be they high or low.

Enter Lill (20s), in a revealing dress and lurid makeup.

LILL

Evenin' Kit.

KIT

Ah, the delightful Lill.

Bradley stands and wobbles.

BRADLEY

(*to Lill*) There you are.

LILL

I'll be with you soon, Bradley. Finish your beer.

KIT

(*to Lill*) Tom was saying that money corrupts.

LILL

I wouldn't know. I never had any.

KIT

He thinks there are two choices, being rotten and rich, or pure and poor.

LILL

I'd be rotten and rich.

KIT

Because?

LILL

Because if rich you can repent, but if poor your screwed.

KIT

*(raises his glass)* Darling Lill, you have the wit of a Sophist.

Bradley approaches.

BRADLEY

Lill, I'm waiting.

LILL

Then wait a bit more. I'm busy.

She sits on Marlowe's lap.

BRADLEY

*(rising anger)* I'll not take second place to this... *(indicates Marlowe)* peasant. Come, I've paid in advance and your time is mine now.

He SNATCHES Lill from Marlowe.

KIT

*(threatening)* The lady said wait.

He pulls her back.

LILL

*(fends them off)* Both of you get your grubby 'ands off me!

BRADLEY

She's no lady, she's a harlot, and I'll do with her as I please.

He GRABS her again. Marlowe stands face to face with Bradley.

KYD

*(worried)* Kit?

KIT

*(to Bradley)* You bully a woman, but how about a man?

BRADLEY

If it's a fight you want, I'm more than happy to teach you a lesson.

He steps back and draws his sword.

ELEANOR

Please, I beg you, not in here.

KIT

*(to Bradley)* Let's take this outside.

BRADLEY

Lead the way.

Marlowe heads to the door. As Bradley follows he makes a THRUST.

KYD

Kit!

Marlowe turns and BARELY MISSES Bradley's sword.

KIT

Bastard!

Marlowe draws his sword and they CLASH.

ELEANOR

Lill, come quick, get the constable.

Lill and Eleanor exit. Bradley RUSHES Marlowe and STABS him in the arm.

KIT

Aw! *(DROPS his sword)*

BRADLEY

Now I will kill thee.

He THRUSTS drunkenly, but Marlowe side-steps, CRASHING over a table.

BRADLEY

Stand still, varlet.

Bradley SWIPES aimlessly. Marlowe ducks and weaves.

KYD

Kit! Catch!

Kyd THROWS his sword. Marlowe CATCHES it.  
Bradley pauses.

KIT

Come, rogue. I'll show you how to fight.

Bradley PUSHES a table aside. Marlowe FENDS him off  
and they SWORD FIGHT.

Bradley LUNGES into Marlowe and they FALL into a  
heap.

Marlowe twists and they roll across the floor, Marlowe  
beneath the man's drunken weight.

KYD

Kit?

Bradley yelps then becomes strangely STILL.

KYD

Kit, are you all right?

KIT

*(from under Bradley)* Get this oaf off me.

Kyd drags Bradley. Marlowe scrambles up, his arm  
bleeding.

KYD

You're wounded!

KIT

Just a scratch. What of him?

Kyd prods Bradley, who WHEEZES hideously. Kyd jumps back.

KYD

Christ! He's alive.

Kit approaches and puts the back of his palm to Bradley's mouth.

KIT

No, just expelling air. He's gone.

KYD

*(panicked)* We must flee!

KIT

No, we stay and tell the truth.

KYD

The *(stutters)* t... truth is however they see it.

KIT

But to flee is to admit guilt.

KYD

I won't go to jail, not again.

KIT

You won't, it'll be my word, you were no part.

A SOLDIER enters, sword drawn, followed by Eleanor and Lill.

SOLDIER

*(to Marlowe and Kyd)* You two, stand back.

Marlowe and Kyd raise their hands.

KIT

Twas self-defense.

SOLDIER

Who's he?

William Bradley, a client. LILL  
 Who started it? SOLDIER  
 He attacked me. KIT  
 (*to soldier*) I had nothing do with it. KYD  
 It's true. I fought him alone KIT  
 (*to Marlowe*) Then you're under arrest. SOLDIER  
 (*protests*) It was self-defense! KIT  
 (*to Eleanor*) What say you? SOLDIER  
 I didn't see nothing, sir. ELEANOR  
 (*to Lill*) And you? SOLDIER  
 He's as a walnut? LILL  
 Say what? SOLDIER  
 To the world he's a hard shell, but inside he's soft as jam. He's no killer. LILL  
 Thank you, Lill. KIT

LILL

I speak as I see it.

SOLDIER

That's to be determined.

KIT

*(to soldier)* You should know that I am under Sir Francis Walsingham's protection.

SOLDIER

*(impressed)* The Queen's spy master?

KIT

*(proud)* The same.

SOLDIER

Where is he? *(looks around)* I don't see him about, so you're not under his protection are you? *(grabs Marlowe)* Now move along.

KIT

*(to Kyd)* Tell Thomas I'm taken, and don't worry, I'll be out soon enough.

SOLDIER

*(to Kyd and Lill)* You two get the body out for the collector.

LILL

That's not my job.

SOLDIER

*(barks)* Just do it or I'll arrest you as accessories. *(to Marlowe)* You. Out.

Marlowe exits, with the soldier's sword at his back. Lill and Kyd approach Bradley's body.

LILL

Hold on a minute.

Lill rummages through Bradley's pocket and digs out a few coins, throws one to Eleanor.

KYD

You'd rob the dead?

LILL

He don't need it. Here. *(gives Kyd a coin)* You gonna say no? *(Kyd ponders, then takes the coin)* Now grab his foot.

They pick up Bradley's legs.

KYD

God knows what they'll do to Kit.

LILL

He's got rich friends, he'll be fine, but this, this is a shame. *(re: Bradley)*

KYD

What shame? He was a drunken lecherous pig.

LILL

All men are lecherous pigs, but he's one less customer.

They drag Bradley off.

### SCENE THREE

The Privy Council, indicated by a large table, a coat of arms above, and a flag of the English cross.

Enter Whitgift (50s), hawkish, wearing bishop's robes, followed by Lord Havenhurst (70s), a dried branch of a man, and Sir Francis Walsingham (50s), neatly trimmed.

HAVENHURST

The Puritans beseech your Grace for the release of their priest.

WHITGIFT

His case is being reviewed.

HAVENHURST

It's been three years. His imprisonment in Newgate jail is causing a rebellion. Some are even talking of fleeing to the New World.



WHITGIFT

Good riddance to them. They are zealots and open our borders to miscreants and nonconformists.

They sit at the large table.

SIR FRANCIS

England is not the tyranny of Spain and prides itself on being a sanctity for the oppressed of Europe.

WHITGIFT

England is for English Anglicans, not dissenters, and that is why I introduced the Code of Morality.

SIR FRANCIS

Push it too far and you'll have the disaster of Calvin's reformation.

WHITGIFT

A risk I'm willing to hazard, for I take my oath to protect the Holy Church seriously.

SIR FRANCIS

Your oath's to God, mine's to my country.

HAVENHURST

And my immediate concern is the Spanish fleet blockaded in the Gironde estuary. *(to Sir Francis)* How long can we keep them pinned down?

SIR FRANCIS

A few months, until they gather their forces.

HAVENHURST

*(to Whitgift)* Any response from the Pope?

WHITGIFT

Clement wishes England to fall and continues to encourage Spain.

Enter Maunder with Marlowe handcuffed.

MAUNDER

My Lords, your Grace.

WHITGIFT

What is it?

MAUNDER

*(approaches)* I present Christopher Marlowe.

SIR FRANCIS

The charge?

MAUNDER

Murder.

Marlowe approaches their table.

KIT

*(bows)* Sir Francis.

MAUNDER

*(hands Havenhurst a report)* It's all there, my Lord.

Havenhurst scans the report.

HAVENHURST

*(to Marlowe)* You appear before this council for the murder of a Mister William Bradley.

KIT

I did not kill him. He fell.

WHITGIFT

*(incredulous)* Fell?

KIT

He was a drunken fop and fell onto his sword.

WHITGIFT

Were there witnesses?

KIT

Three souls, your Grace.

HAVENHURST

*(reads the report)* A writer, a whore, and a barmaid.

WHITGIFT

Hardly reliable.

SIR FRANCIS

Therefore, I say we should release him.

WHITGIFT

The rise in murders and assault in this country are a plague unto themselves. The new Code will cleanse the city of these drunken rakes. He should be punished accordingly.

KIT

But it was self defense, as is my right.

WHITGIFT

Your rights are what we decide they are.

SIR FRANCIS

Or what your Code decides? *(to Havenhurst)* Marlowe's done us great service.

HAVENHURST

Yes, he did play a part in the revealing of Mary's conspirators, for which we are grateful.

SIR FRANCIS

And other affairs since.

WHITGIFT

That does not obviate him from the law.

HAVENHURST

*(frustrated)* Archbishop, there are more pressing matters.

WHITGIFT

More important than heresy? I think not, my lord. As bindweed has invaded England's fields, heretics invade our faith and smother our English church. So the agitators must be pulled out by the roots. Gentlemen, it's time we formally investigate the School of Atheists.

SIR FRANCIS

I can vouch that they are not heretical, Archbishop.

WHITGIFT

Yes, well, Thomas is your nephew, so I don't take much stock in your appraisal.

HAVENHURST

And I am the head of the council and we will press on. *(to Marlowe)* You are dismissed on probation.

KIT

*(bows)* Thank you, my lord.

Marlowe exits.

HAVENHURST

*(to Whitgift and Sir Francis)* Now to the rebuilding of our fleet. We'll have to levy a tax on the merchants and the church.

WHITGIFT

*(laughs)* The Church does not pay tax.

HAVENHURST

*(dour)* It will now.

WHITGIFT

I'll raise this with Her Majesty.

HAVENHURST

It was she who suggested it.

SIR FRANCIS

Archbishop, we must unite or we'll devolve into separate into factions.

WHITGIFT

Better smaller and purer, than aggrandized with no common morality.

HAVENHURST

Then you push us further apart.

Whitgift stands, to leave.

WHITGIFT

I understood we were on the same side, but I see now that you betray the church.

HAVENHURST

I do what's necessary.

WHITGIFT

*(irked)* Without the Church you are godless. Good day to you both. *(exits)*

SIR FRANCIS

*(to Havenhurst)* He'll be more trouble to us than the Spanish.

HAVENHURST

He is stubborn.

SIR FRANCIS

He's more than that, he's too impassioned with dogma.

HAVENHURST

And so you must warn Thomas.

SIR FRANCIS

He believes his school is protected by its illustrious members, Raleigh, Harriot, and such.

HAVENHURST

Walter Raleigh has the queen's favor now, but for how long? And the others will jump ship like rats once Whitgift gets close.

SIR FRANCIS

Thomas is young and resolute, and won't listen.

HAVENHURST

I remember you were the same once.

SIR FRANCIS

A long time ago, my lord, I've since learned moderation.

HAVENHURST

Yes, well, the rot beings with that friend of his.

SIR FRANCIS

Marlowe, the writer.

HAVENHURST

He pushes the very boundary of decency.

SIR FRANCIS

But his plays are good, my lord.

HAVENHURST

That may be, but his effect on your nephew is not. Tell him to keep away from Marlowe.

SIR FRANCIS

I will, my lord.

End of Act One.

## ACT TWO

## SCENE FOUR

Lights up on The Rose Theater stage, parts of the Faustus set erected - a desk, jars of fetuses, and a globe. Henslowe, wearing thick make-up and in the star sequined gown of Dr. Faustus, reads a manuscript, going over his lines. Judith reads a text next to him.

FAUSTUS/HENSLOWE

*All things that move between the quiet poles  
Shall be at my command...* Prompt.

JUDITH

Emperors...

FAUSTUS/HENSLOWE

*... emperors and kings  
Are but obeyed in their several provinces,  
Nor can they raise the wind, or rend the clouds;  
But his dominion that exceeds in this,  
Stretcheth as far as doth the mind of man.  
(he stops, looks around) Where is he?*

JUDITH

Drunk in some alley no doubt.

HENSLOWE

You think he'd be here for his own play.

JUDITH

He'd be late for his own funeral. Let's get on.

HENSLOWE

*(continues) A sound magician is a mighty god:  
Here, Faustus, tire thy brains to gain a deity.*

JUDITH

*(shakes her head)* Are we sure?

HENSLOWE

About?

JUDITH

*(worried)* This.

HENSLOWE

What about it?

JUDITH

It's... supernatural.

HENSLOWE

As was Spencer's *The Faerie Queen*.

JUDITH

That's different.

HENSLOWE

Tis a tale of magic and fantasy.

JUDITH

Knights and elves and princesses, which gave no offense.

HENSLOWE

And was much loved by Her Majesty.

JUDITH

But *Faustus* is all devils and necromancy.

HENSLOWE

Tis dark, I'll admit.

JUDITH

People don't want dark, there's enough of it out there. They want to laugh. How about *Arden of Faversham*? Our actors still remember it.

HENSLOWE

The *Faustus* sets are made, the actors cast, my dear.



JUDITH

Don't you 'my dear' me.

HENSLOWE

I'm sorry, but we're committed. It's too late.

JUDITH

Open your eyes, Phillip, foreigners rounded up and taken God knows where, people arrested for blasphemy. That Bishop Whitgift is clamping down.

HENSLOWE

We have our own problems. We have a production to put on.

JUDITH

The fanatics will be at our doorstep with this one, I'm telling you.

Enter Marlowe.

JUDITH

Speak of the devil.

KIT

Afternoon, Philip, Judith.

JUDITH

Where have you been?

KIT

Busy. Did the mask arrive?

HENSLOWE

Just came. *(passes a devil mask)* Careful, the dye's still wet.

KIT

*(examines the mask)* I apologize for my tardiness.

JUDITH

Is there something we should know?

KIT

*(defensive)* Such as?

JUDITH

You tell us. One minute you're here, the next you're gone with that toff.

KIT

Sir Thomas is my friend.

JUDITH

See that he doesn't lead you astray.

KIT

You'd do well to be cordial.

HENSLOWE

And we will, but right now we must continue, we haven't much time left. Page thirty.

*(as Faustus) Accursed Faustus, where is mercy now?*

*I do repent; and yet I do despair:*

*Hell strives with grace for conquest in my breast:*

*What shall I do to shun the snares of death?*

MEPHISTOPHELES/KIT

*(mimics a growling devil voice) Thou traitor, Faustus, I arrest thy soul*

*For disobedience to my sovereign lord.*

*Revolt, or I'll in piecemeal tear thy flesh.*

Judith shakes her head in dismay and exits. Henslowe picks up on Marlowe's energy and emotes...

FAUSTUS/HENSLOWE

*Sweet Mephistopheles, entreat thy lord,*

*To pardon my unjust presumption...*

*And with my blood again I will confirm*

*My former vow I made to Lucifer.*

MEPHISTOPHELES/KIT

*Do it, then, quickly, with unfeigned heart,*

*Lest greater danger do attend thy drift.*

FAUSTUS/HENSLOWE

*One thing, good servant, let me crave of thee,*

*To glut the longing of my heart's desire,—*

*That I might have unto my paramour*

*That heavenly Helen which I saw of late,  
Whose sweet embracings may extinguish clean  
Those thoughts that do dissuade me from my vow,  
And keep mine oath I made to Lucifer.*

MEPHISTOPHELES/KIT

*Faustus, this, or what else thou shalt desire,  
Shall be perform'd in twinkling of an eye.*

FAUSTUS/HENSLOWE

*(approaches Judith) Was this the face that launch'd a thousand ships,  
And burnt the topless towers of Ilium—  
Sweet Helen, make me immortal with a kiss.—  
[Kisses her.]  
Her lips suck forth my soul: see, where it flies!—  
Come, Helen, come, give me my soul again.  
Here will I dwell, for heaven is in these lips,  
And all is dross that is not Helen...*

He trails off, looking at the side of stage, where Lady Anne (20s), elegantly dressed and bejewelled, is watching with her servant, Susan (20s).

HENSLOWE

My lady. *(he bows)*

KIT

*(turns and sees...)* Anne.

ANNE

*(to Susan)* Wait here.

SUSAN

Yes, mam.

Anne approaches Henslowe and Kit.

HENSLOWE

For what do we owe the pleasure of your company?

ANNE

I came to wish you luck.

HENSLOWE

We're most grateful. Will you and your husband be attending?

ANNE

His Lordship says plays are for simpletons.

HENSLOWE

*(falsely cheery)* Well, each to his own, I suppose.

KIT

*(to Anne)* As his Lordship is so obtuse, perhaps you'd attend alone?

ANNE

It would be unbecoming for a lady of my rank.

KIT

Fuck your rank.

ANNE

*(sharp)* The exuberance of your passion makes your tongue crude.

KIT

*(sardonic)* Sorry I hurt your delicate sensibilities.

ANNE

Tis you I worry for, not me.

KIT

And you must live life and savor London's art.

ANNE

I have seen all of your plays.

KIT

*(shocked and delighted)* You have?

ANNE

Every one.

KIT

*(bows)* I am honored.

HENSLOWE

Forgive me, my lady, we're all under great pressure to get *Faustus* up and running.

ANNE

I understand. *(to Susan)* Fetch my carriage.

SUSAN

Yes, mam. *(she exits)*

ANNE

*(to Henslowe)* I shan't disturb you any longer.

HENSLOWE

Our best wishes to his Lordship.

ANNE

I'm sure it'll be another success.

KIT

*(bows)* Thank you, my lady. Your good wishes are our blessing.

ANNE

And your plays enrich us all.

KIT

You've seen them?

ANNE

I have missed none. Goodbye, Master Marlowe.

Anne starts to leave. Marlowe follows her. Henslowe grabs him.

HENSLOWE

Don't make it worse.

KIT

Fear not, I know her. *(runs after her)* Anne, wait.

ANNE

*(turns back)* I cannot stay.

KIT

I think you mean you cannot stay away.

ANNE

How so?

KIT

You didn't come to wish us luck.

ANNE

Then why am I here?

KIT

To see me.

ANNE

You think too much of yourself.

KIT

Have I not earned it?

ANNE

And have you not seen the bodies of heretics hanging in the street, by my father's order left to rot as warning to us all?

KIT

We must not be swayed by fear, but by love and reason.

ANNE

You are an idealist.

KIT

And you're bound to a raddled lord.

ANNE

*(lying)* I'm content enough.



KIT

*(smiles)* There.

ANNE

What?

KIT

Your passion rekindles and you become as alluring as Helen.

ANNE

I won't be talked to like one of your tavern whores.

KIT

What's wrong with them? They're fine ladies.

ANNE

Good God, Kit!

Henslowe approaches.

HENSLOWE

I'm sorry, my Lady but, *(to Marlowe)* we really must rehearse.

ANNE

Farewell, Mister Henslowe.

KIT

*(to Anne)* Not farewell, but anon.

She shakes her head and exits.

JUDITH

*(to Marlowe)* Can you not keep your tongue in check?

KIT

Tis no foul, I jest with her.

JUDITH

You play a dangerous game, her husband is a powerful man.

KIT

So you would use her for your own ends?



HENSLOWE

I think what Judith's saying is that it's best to be pleasant to all. Anyway, back to work.  
*(as Faustus to Judith) I will be Paris, and for love of thee,  
 Instead of Troy, shall Wertenberg be sack'd;  
 And I will combat with weak Menelaus,  
 And wear thy colours on my plumed crest;  
 And then return to Helen for a kiss.*

Enter Maunder.

MAUNDER

*(barks)* Marlowe. A word.

JUDITH

What does he want?

KIT

I don't know. Give me a moment.

He approaches Maunder at the side of the stage.

KIT

*(impatient)* Yes?

MAUNDER

You must attend Bishop Whitgift, at his office, at seven in the morrow.

KIT

I can't, I have a play to...

MAUNDER

*(interrupts)* And do not be late. *(starts to leave)*

KIT

What's this about?

MAUNDER

You'll see.

Maunder exits. On the other side of the stage Henslowe and Judith trade worried looks.

JUDITH

I don't like it. What's he doing here?

HENSLOWE

It's none of our business.

JUDITH

Of course it is, if it affects the play.

Marlowe approaches, sullen.

JUDITH

What was that about?

KIT

Some bureaucracy I must fulfill. Let's go back to the top of twenty.

JUDITH

Hold on. That's no explanation.

KIT

*(reads as Mephistopheles) Now, Faustus, ask what thou wilt.*

JUDITH

Philip?

FAUSTUS/HENSLOWE

Not now, dear, we must press on.

*(continues reading) First will I question with thee about hell.*

*Tell me, where is the place that men call hell?*

MEPHISTOPHELES/KIT

*Under the heavens.*

JUDITH

*(shakes her head at Henslowe) Fine, don't listen to me. You know best. (she exits)*

FAUSTUS/HENSLOWE

*(continues reading) Ay, but whereabouts?*

## MEPHISTOPHELES/KIT

*Within the bowels of these elements,  
Where we are tortur'd and remain for ever:  
Hell hath no limits, nor is circumscrib'd  
In one self place; for where we are is hell,  
And where hell is, there must we ever be: (pauses as he looks to the door, nervous)*

## HENSLOWE

What's wrong? Your mind is elsewhere.

## MEPHISTOPHELES/KIT

*(snaps back) Sorry. And, to conclude, when all the world dissolves,  
And every creature shall be purified,  
All places shall be hell that are not heaven.*

## SCENE FIVE

Whitgift's office, a desk, a crucifix, and the Crusader's red cross of the English flag. Whitgift at the desk writing.

Andrew Perne, (50s), gray bearded and gowned, approaches.

## PERNE

John?

## WHITGIFT

*(looks up)* Andrew.

## PERNE

Do you I disturb you?

## WHITGIFT

No, come in.

## PERNE

*(cautiously)* Will you be putting my name forward for the bishopry?

## WHITGIFT

When Her Majesty's mood improves.

PERNE

*(frustrated)* It's been several years now.

WHITGIFT

Is not Chancellor reward enough?

PERNE

Yes, but I've given you my affection these past years, am I to just live in hope?

WHITGIFT

Allay your fears, Andrew, I will make you a bishop yet.

PERNE

Then I wait patiently. Is all well?

WHITGIFT

Why?

PERNE

You seem... disturbed.

WHITGIFT

You see into my heart. Lord Havenhurst has 'sueded the queen to tax our church.

PERNE

Good God, does he want war between us?

WHITGIFT

He seeks to separate the church from the crown.

PERNE

Then he's as great a threat to us as Spain.

Enter Marlowe.

KIT

You wanted to see me.

WHITGIFT

*(to Perne)* Excuse me, Chancellor.

PERNE

(bows) Good day, your Grace.

Perne exits.

WHITGIFT

Master Marlowe.

KIT

You summoned me.

WHITGIFT

Indeed.

KIT

For what purpose?

WHITGIFT

You can be of use.

KIT

I doubt it, your Grace, I'm just a writer.

WHITGIFT

Not just a scribe, but a spy to boot.

KIT

No, your Grace, you mistake me for...

WHITGIFT

*(snaps)* Don't contradict me. I'm aware of your previous work for Sir Francis. You will use to report to me on Thomas' School.

KIT

I'm not a member, I cannot just...

WHITGIFT

Then become one and get me the names of his associates.

KIT

And if refuse?

WHITGIFT

The murder charge will proceed, but work with me and you'll remain free to produce your 'entertainments'.

KIT

Do I have a choice?

WHITGIFT

We must all serve someone, Marlowe.

KIT

I will try my best, your Grace.

WHITGIFT

Excellent, then I shall see you next week for your first report.

KIT

*(sullen)* Yes, your Grace. Is that all?

WHITGIFT

Your plays.

KIT

What of them?

WHITGIFT

They cause much umbrage.

KIT

I'm sorry you feel that way, for many say they're the best...

WHITGIFT

*(interrupts)* I care not what the mob likes or dislikes.

KIT

I stand proud of my achievements.

WHITGIFT

While I serve a higher purpose. You may leave.

KIT

Yes, your Grace.

Marlowe exits.

WHITGIFT

*(calls out)* Sergeant. *(Maunder enters)* The Puritan priest imprisoned in Newgate.

MAUNDER

Yes, your Grace.

WHITGIFT

Execute him.

MAUNDER

But we have no warrant.

WHITGIFT

The council is deadlocked and cannot make a decision. He is a cause of rebellion and must be extinguished. You have my authority.

MAUNDER

Yes, your Grace.

WHITGIFT

Do it immediately.

MAUNDER

I shall see that it's done. *(he exits)*

WHITGIFT

*(closes his hands in prayer)* Lord help me to help and guide them to your everlasting love.

A church bell TOLLS in the distance.

## SCENE SIX

The tavern. Eleanor behind the bar, Lill leaning on it.  
Enter Marlowe.

KIT

Hello, Lill, you're a sight for sore eyes.

LILL

So they let you out?

KIT

Probation.

ELEANOR

*(to Marlowe)* Single or double?

KIT

Give me the bottle.

LILL

Why so glum?

KIT

The world weighs heavy on me.

LILL

Tell me about it. Plague. War. Nothing to eat. The world's on a precipice and yet we ignore the pestilence and rush towards war like headless chickens.

KIT

All will be well when we are governed by reason.

LILL

*(laughs)* You may as well wish the lion be tamed.

KIT

Oh Lill, I'm leveraged to do that which is against my will.

Eleanor brings a bottle and a glass. He pours a glass and slides it across the bar to Lill.



LILL

*(she slides it back)* Too early for me.

KIT

Some of your clients are members of the Parliament, are they not?

LILL

It's supposed to be secret.

KIT

And I shall keep it, but will you spread a rumor for me?

LILL

Why would I do that? *(he gives her a coin, she bites it and smiles)* What rumor?

KIT

That the Archbishop is in unholy relations with one Andrew Perne, the Vice Chancellor of Cambridge University.

LILL

Is it true?

KIT

Does it matter?

Enter Thomas.

THOMAS

Kit, there are you. I've been looking all over. Hello, Lill.

LILL

My lord.

THOMAS

*(to Marlowe aside)* I heard about your arrest, thank God my uncle was in attendance at the council. Has there been no further outcome?

KIT

Meaning?

THOMAS

No one has spoken to you since?

KIT

None but the Henslowes.

THOMAS

If any approach, I must know.

KIT

You shall be the first.

THOMAS

The tide of power shifts and we must be alert.

KIT

You speak in riddles.

THOMAS

We must be discreet. Eleanor, another glass. *(to Kit)* It's good to see you, my friend.  
*(puts his arm over Marlowe's shoulder)* You've been too busy with your work.

KIT

And you with yours.

THOMAS

Then let us drink and catch up. *(pours a glass and raises it)* To Her Majesty.

KIT

*(raises his glass)* Her Majesty.

Lights down to the Collector on the side of the stage.

COLLECTOR

*(sings)* Long may she reign,  
in majesty glorious,  
ever victorious,  
God save the Queen!

*(to us)* Tis a dilemma indeed. To lie like a cowardly cur or to dare speak truth like a man?  
Which is the wiser? To survive we must acquiesce, but to thrive we must resist, and by  
doing so risk all, even if it ends in blood.

*(sings)* Good friends and companions, come join me in rhyme

*Come lift up your voices in chorus with mine  
 Lets drink and be merry, all grief to refrain  
 For we may and might never all meet here again.*

He exits.

SCENE SEVEN

One side of the stage is a bedroom with a curtained four-poster bed, and a bedroom door. From behind the closed curtains...

ANNE (HIDDEN)

*(panting)* Don't stop.

KIT (HIDDEN)

*(moaning)* Yes!

ANNE (HIDDEN)

*(about to climax)* Keep going.

KIT (HIDDEN)

Yeaaaaa!

ANNE (HIDDEN)

Oh, right there. Harder.

KIT (HIDDEN)

*(climaxes)* Ohhh.

ANNE (HIDDEN)

*(climaxes)* Aahhhhh!

The curtain whips back revealing Marlowe, hair dishevelled, and Anne, flushed, both half naked.

ANNE

You must go.

KIT

*(leans back into her)* Another kiss...

ANNE

Enough.

KIT

...of your divine lips... *(leans in deeper)*

ANNE

*(pushes him away)* You're insatiable.

KIT

... to taste your sweet love once more. *(her pushing softens and they are about to kiss, he notices a dark patch on her shoulder)* A bruise? I'm sorry, I get carried away.

ANNE

It's not yours.

KIT

Oh?

ANNE

*(turns away)* Please ignore it.

KIT

Your husband?

She doesn't answer and dresses.

KIT

*(starts to dress)* Come with me and live unchained from that ogre.

ANNE

And be penniless and in shame?

KIT

I have money.

ANNE

Where? To the New World with the Puritans? They're more fanatical than my father.

KIT

So you suffer your husband's abuse?

ANNE

He will die soon.

KIT

Are you a Cassandra?

ANNE

It's inevitable. He's drinks too much and is rotten with gout.

KIT

Ah, the rich man's disease.

ANNE

And I'll inherit his estate for there's no other family. Will you wait for me?

KIT

*(leans in to her)* My sweet Anne, I would wait to the end of the earth for you.

They KISS.

On the other side of the stage, behind the bedroom door, enter Havenhurst, using a walking stick, waking in pain, followed by Susan, Anne's servant.

HAVENHURST

Where is she?

Susan runs in front of the door.

SUSAN

I haven't seen her, my lord.

HAVENHURST

I pay your wages, so your loyalty is to me now.

SUSAN

Yes, my lord, perhaps she's in the garden.

He pushes past her, opens the door and sees Anne and Kit kissing.

HAVENHURST

*(growls at Marlowe)* You bastard. I'll have you flayed alive.

ANNE

Be calm, good husband.

HAVENHURST

Get out! I'll deal with you momentarily.

Anne buttons up her dress and scurries to a side room.

HAVENHURST

*(to Marlowe)* You must desire death? *(JABS Marlowe with the walking stick)*

KIT

*(backing along the wall)* I beg your pardon. I meant no insult.

HAVENHURST

*(fuming)* Meant no insult! To be cuckolded is the most pernicious insult to a man's honor. *(RAMS the walking stick into Marlowe's throat)* You've sullied that which is mine. You'll be hung in a gibbet...

KIT

*(on his toes backed against the wall)* I...I can help you.

HAVENHURST

... for the crows to peck out your eyes.

KIT

*(blurts)* I can spy on the bishop.

HAVENHURST

Whitgift?

KIT

He wants me to report on Thomas' school.

HAVENHURST

*(lowers the walking stick)* Why would I trust a runt like you?

KIT

Because we're both opposed to his suppressions. You were one of the few who dared vote against his code.

HAVENHURST

You're well informed. Thomas, no doubt.

KIT

I pledge myself to you, my lord, I will be your ears and eyes on the bishop.

HAVENHURST

*(lowers his walking stick from Marlowe's throat)* Very well, and I'm sure your fertile imagination can foresee the consequence of betraying me.

KIT

Yes, my lord. I am yours.

HAVENHURST

Get out before I change my mind.

Marlowe exits.

HAVENHURST

*(shouts)* Anne! In here now!

Anne runs in from the side room.

ANNE

*(terrified)* My lord, I beg your forgiveness.

HAVENHURST

Sssh.

ANNE

*(confused)* My lord?

HAVENHURST

*(opens his arms)* Come. *(she cautiously approaches)* I'm old and you're in the bloom of youth.

ANNE

It matters not to me, my Lord. I was weak, I admit it.

HAVENHURST

Come closer. *(opens his arms)* I know it was your father's decision that we wed and not your desire.

ANNE

I will learn to think differently.

HAVENHURST

*(wraps his arms around her, she reluctantly leans in)* There, you see. We can be close. *(moves to kiss her, she pulls back)* Do I repulse you so?

ANNE

No, my Lord, but...

HAVENHURST

Then kiss me and fulfill your vows.

He leans in, they are about to kiss, but she turns away. He suddenly GRABS her hair and RIPS her head back.

ANNE

*(screams)* My Lord!

He THROWS her to the ground.

HAVENHURST

That's right. I am a Lord, a Havenhurst, whereas you are nothing but the spawn of a lowly Bishop. I have given you a title and estate.

He is about to STRIKE her, but she's doesn't cower. She STANDS UP and faces him.

ANNE

Do your worst, sir, but I swear on my holy soul... *(crosses herself)* I'll never betray you again. *(He SPASMS and drops the walking stick)* What's wrong, my lord?

Havenhurst looks at his hand. It is SHAKING. He grips his wrist to stop the tremor.



HAVENHURST

If you cannot love me, then show me the respect I deserve.

ANNE

Yes, my lord, you have my devotion.

HAVENHURST

We shall see.

He exits.

Anne sits on the bed and sighs...

ANNE

Oh Kit, what have we done?

#### SCENE EIGHT

Lights up and we are on The Rose Theater stage, set as the studio of Dr. Faustus - a globe, candles, a pentagram on the wall, and a large book on a podium. At the side of the stage 'the crowd' (2-3 actors) watch the show.

Enter Henslowe as Doctor Faustus, a high collar gown, eyes blackened.

FAUSTUS / HENSLOWE

*(stentorian) Now that the gloomy shadow of the earth,  
Longing to view Orion's drizzling look,  
Leaps from th' antartic world unto the sky,  
And dims the welkin with her pitchy breath,  
Faustus, begin thine incantations,  
And try if devils will obey thy hest,  
Seeing thou hast pray'd and sacrific'd to them.*

Faustus regards a circle on the stage where names are written in chalk.

At the side of the stage the crowd "Ooo's" and "Ahhs".

## FAUSTUS/HENSLOWE

*Within this circle is Jehovah's name,  
Forward and backward anagrammatiz'd,  
Th' abbreviated names of holy saints,  
Figures of every adjunct to the heavens,  
And characters of signs and erring stars,  
By which the spirits are enforc'd to rise:*

Faustus moves his hands in circles as though casting a spell. Fog begins to billow across the stage.

## FAUSTUS/HENSLOWE

*Then fear not, Faustus, but be resolute,  
And try the uttermost magic can perform.  
(raises his arms, incanting) Valeat Mephistophilis.*

A FLASH OF LIGHT and enter Mephistopheles, a horned devil, played by Marlowe.

Whitgift and Ma under enter the side of the stage with the crowd.

## WHITGIFT

*(aside)* Are your men ready?

## MAUNDER

Yes, your Grace.

On center stage...

## MEPHISTOPHELES/KIT

*Now, Faustus, what wouldst thou have me do?*

## FAUSTUS/HENSLOWE

*I charge thee wait upon me whilst I live,  
To do whatever Faustus shall command,  
Be it to make the moon drop from her sphere,  
Or the ocean to overwhelm the world.*

Faustus holds a pentagram up and Mephistopheles cowers as more fog billows.

On the side of the stage...

CROWD 1

*(shouts out)* Tis sorcery!

CROWD 2

Black magic!

CROWD 1

The devil himself.

FAUSTUS/HENSLOWE

*(to the crowd)* Fear not, friends, tis only make believe.

MEPHISTOPHELES/KIT

*(aside to Henslowe)* Keep going. We have them.

On stage Mephistopheles backs into a corner, afraid of the pentagram...

FAUSTUS/HENSLOWE

*Did not he charge thee to appear to me?*

MEPHISTOPHELES/KIT

*No, I came hither of mine own accord.*

FAUSTUS/HENSLOWE

*Did not my conjuring speeches raise thee?*

MEPHISTOPHELES/KIT

*That was the cause, but yet per accidens;...*

One of the crowd stands up and shouts out...

CROWD 1

Tis magic.

MEPHISTOPHELES/KIT

*For, when we hear one rack the name of God,*

CROWD 2

Sorcery!

MEPHISTOPHELES/KIT

*Abjure the Scriptures and his Saviour Christ.*

CROWD 1

The black arts!

MEPHISTOPHELES/KIT

*We fly, in hope to get his glorious soul;*

CROWD 2

It's against God.

MEPHISTOPHELES/KIT

*And pray devoutly to the prince of hell.*

WHITGIFT

*(aside to Maunder)* This has gone far enough. Put an end to it.

MAUNDER

Yes, your Grace.

Maunder BLOWS a WHISTLE.

MAUNDER

*(to the audience)* The play's done. Go to your homes.

The crowd stand and shout...

CROWD 2

Lucifer's work!

CROWD 1

It's Satan himself.

CROWD 2

Burn the place to the ground.

CROWD 1

Tis a pit of devils.

MAUNDER

*(to the crowd)* There's no magic. Be calm and go about your business.

Marlowe disappears in the fog. Whitgift approaches  
Judith and Henslowe.

HENSLOWE

Our gravest apologies, your Excellency.

JUDITH

We warned him, didn't we, Phillip?

HENSLOWE

But he wouldn't listen.

WHITGIFT

Where does Marlowe reside?

HENSLOWE

*(nervous)* I know not.

WHITGIFT

*(to Maunder)* Take him.

Maunder GRABS Henslowe.

JUDITH

Wait.

HENSLOWE

*(reprimands)* Judith!

JUDITH

I'm not risking your neck for his. *(to Whitgift)* He shares rooms with Thomas Kyd, in  
Holborn, next to the Swan Tavern.

WHITGIFT

*(to Maunder)* Bring me this Thomas Kyd.

HENSLOWE

Your Grace, we cannot survive without our writers.

WHITGIFT

Your writers are the problem. This theater is hereby closed. Indefinitely.

Whitgift and Maunder exit.

JUDITH

*(despair)* What're we going to do, Philip?

HENSLOWE

Twas inevitable that either the plague or the church would close us.

JUDITH

We need new writers. Marlowe's a disaster.

HENSLOWE

We have a signed contract.

JUDITH

How does that bind us, when the church shuts us down?

HENSLOWE

He brings the crowds in.

JUDITH

Not any more, and now he's got the Bishop on his back. We're finished. It's all over. We'll be bankrupted!

HENSLOWE

*(reassuring)* No, my dear, we'll come up with something.

JUDITH

*(almost in tears)* Like what?

HENSLOWE

I don't know, but we'll find a way back. We're actors, we always do.

## SCENE NINE

A street indicated by a doorway. Enter the Collector, wearing his grotesque beaked mask, wheeling his cart covered in a sheet, and humming a tune.

## COLLECTOR

*(sings) For to see mad Tom of Bedlam  
Ten thousand years I'll travel  
Mad Maudlin goes on dirty toes  
to save her shoes from gravel.  
Now I repent that ever  
Poor Tom was so Disdain'd  
My wits were lost when him I cross't  
Which makes me go thus chain'd .*

## KIT (HIDDEN)

Hey.

## COLLECTOR

*(turns around, can't see anyone)* Who's there?

## KIT (HIDDEN)

A friend.

Marlowe steps out the shadows.

## COLLECTOR

It's you again.

## KIT

*(looks around anxiously)* I beg of thee a favor.

## COLLECTOR

*(suspicious)* What kind of favor?

## KIT

Carry me away.

## COLLECTOR

Why? Who's after you?

KIT

The bishop's man.

COLLECTOR

Again? *(looks around)* Get under. *(indicates the tarp)*

Marlowe lifts the tarp revealing rotting bodies.

KIT

Oh God! *(almost vomits at the bodies)* Is this is our end? Beauty, honor, sin, all becomes rotten, and then dissolves away.

A sound off stage.

COLLECTOR

Someone comes. Be quick, sir, lest you're discovered. Bury yourself deep.

Marlowe covers his mouth and climbs among the corpses.  
The Collector pulls the sheet over.

Enter Maunder.

MAUNDER

You there. Have you seen a young man pass?

COLLECTOR

I see many men pass away to the other side.

MAUNDER

I mean a living man, you cretin.

COLLECTOR

No, sir, everyone's at the theater watching that new devil play.

MAUNDER

*(suspicious)* What've you got here?

COLLECTOR

Nothing but what the grave will hold.

Maunder pokes the sheet then starts to lift it.



COLLECTOR

I wouldn't do that.

MAUNDER

*(grimaces, holds his nose)* Jesus Christ! It stinks!

COLLECTOR

That'll be the maggots as the flesh putrefies.

MAUNDER

*(puts the sheet back down)* Get this rot to the pits.

COLLECTOR

Yes, sir, on my way now. *(Maunder exits)* *(to Marlowe)* Stay under, sir, we'll be gone hence.

*(wheels the cart and sings...)*

*I went down to Satan's kitchen  
to get me food one morning  
and there I got souls piping hot  
all on the spit a-turning.  
Then I took up a cauldron  
Where boil'd ten thousand 'Tornies  
'Twas full of flame, yet I drank the same  
and wished them happy journeys.*

He exits.

A church bell TOLLS and THUNDER off stage in the distance... a FLASH of lightning.

End of Act Two.

## ACT THREE

## SCENE TEN

Lights up on Marlowe and Kyd's modest room, two beds, one desk, a window. THUNDERS rolls in the distance.

The door opens. Marlowe BURSTS in and heads for the desk and pulls papers out of the draws.

Enter Kyd and Lill, wearing a shawl, laughing and kissing.

KYD

Let's get married.

LILL

You don't want someone like me?

KYD

I've never met anyone like you.

LILL

Which is probably a good thing.

KYD

I love you, Lill.

LILL

You're a sweet man, Tom, but (*grabs his crotch*) it's your cock talking.

KIT

Hello, boys and girls.

They turn and notice Marlowe.

KYD

Kit! How did it go?

KIT

Pandemonium. They believed I was a devil.

KYD

*(laughs)* You *(stutters)* t... transported them.

KIT

*(cold)* Yes, but Whitgift closed the theater.

KYD

What? Why?

LILL

Trouble follows you like flies to shit.

KIT

*(sarcastic)* Have you ever considered poetry instead of prostitution?

LILL

Not likely. Look at you two.

KIT

Lill, did you do as I asked?

LILL

You mean spread your little rumor.

KYD

What rumor?

LILL

*(to Marlowe)* It's out there and spreading.

KIT

Thank you, darling Lill. *(kisses her)* Sorry, but time's of the essence.

He pushes her half out of the door.

KYD

Where are you going?

KIT

Away from here.

Lill turns, her shawl drops, unnoticed, and she jams her foot in the door.

LILL

I ain't been paid.

KIT

Tom?

KIT

What?

KIT

*(snaps his fingers)* A shilling. *(Kyd hands a coin to Marlowe who passes it to Lill)* There. Now go.

LILL

*(flirting)* Bye Tom. See you later.

KYD

*(flirting)* Bye Lill.

Marlowe closes the door on her.

KYD

Closed permanently?

KIT

It pricked his piety so he declared it heretical.

KYD

I *(stutters)* t... told you, you go *(stutters)* t... too far.

KIT

What we have begun, Spencer, Johnson, Shakespeare, you, Watson, and I, must be fulfilled.

KYD

I do not want to be a martyr.

KIT

Nor I, but I'll not back down and you can't abandon your Hamlet out of fear, it's in your blood.

Heavy feet STOMPING off stage.

KIT

*(looks around)* The window.

He rushes over and opens it.

KYD

*(nervous)* I'm not going to jump.

KIT

We have to.

A hard KNOCKING at the door.

MAUNDER (OFF STAGE)

Open up! I know you're in there.

Marlowe climbs through the window.

KIT

Come on, Tom.

KYD

I... I... I can't.

KIT

You must.

KYD

*(terrified)* It's *(stutters)* t... too high!

The door handle turns and rattles, but it's locked.

MAUNDER (OFF STAGE)

*(shouts)* Open the door!

KIT

*(to Kyd)* Roll as you land.

Marlowe JUMPS and is gone.

MAUNDER (OFF STAGE)

Open up now!

KIT (OFF STAGE)

Come on, Tom!

KYD

*(looks through the window terrified)* It's *(stutters)* t... too far.

KIT (OFF STAGE)

For God's sake jump!

The door BURSTS open. Maunder STORMS in.

MAUNDER

Stop where you are.

KYD

*(out the window)* Go Kit, flee.

Maunder GRABS Kyd and looks out the window.

KIT (OFF STAGE)

*Te futueo!*

MAUNDER

*(to Kyd)* What did he say?

KYD

*(translates)* "Fuck you."

MAUNDER

We'll get him yet. Right, what you got here?

Maunder TEARS through papers on the desk and reads the titles.

MAUNDER

*'The Spanish Tragedy', 'King Leir'.*

KYD

My plays.

MAUNDER

*(tosses them aside) (finds a pamphlet) What's this? (reads clumsily) "A Paper on the Pos...itions of Cel..."*

KYD

Celestial.

MAUNDER

*"Celestial Bodies"*.

KYD

*(proudly)* By Giovanni Bruno. It proves Copernicus' theorems. He's a genius.

MAUNDER

*(disgusted)* He's a Catholic and this is blasphemy.

KYD

*(dismissive)* He's an atheist and it is science.

MAUNDER

*(unimpressed)* You can discuss it with the Archbishop at the Tower.

Maunder SHOVES Kyd to the door.

KYD

I haven't done anything.

MAUNDER

*(puts him in an arm lock)* It's not what you do, but what you think.

He shoves Kyd and they exit.

## SCENE ELEVEN

A meeting room in Durham House. On the wall a banner with a pyramid in a circle with an eye at the apex, and the words "NUVOS ORDO SECLORUM", familiar to us from the American one dollar note. Thomas enters followed by Marlowe.

THOMAS

*(angry)* You assured me you'd be discreet.

KIT

They make false accusations.

THOMAS

False or true, it matters not, and now you're hunted by Whitgift's man!

KIT

I cannot leave Tom in that hell.

THOMAS

We can do nothing else.

KIT

But it's a vendetta against me, Tom is guiltless.

THOMAS

This is bigger than you, Kit. Whitgift claws his way up the ladder. He aims to fell us humanists along with the Catholics and Puritans.

KIT

So you'll not help Tom?

THOMAS

We must look to ourselves.

Enter Lady Anne.

THOMAS

Anne.



ANNE

*(surprised)* Kit!

KIT

*(bows)* My lady.

ANNE

I apologize for my father's draconian closure of your play.

KIT

You heard?

ANNE

I was there and you're right, it's the best you've written, it's a revolution.

KIT

Thank you, my lady, but alas no more.

THOMAS

Kit was telling me his friend, Thomas Kyd, has been imprisoned.

KIT

*(to Anne)* Can your husband help?

ANNE

I would not dare ask him, not after...

KIT

Of course.

THOMAS

After what?

KIT

Nothing.

ANNE

You should leave before Maunder finds you.

KIT

I must help Tom.

THOMAS

Then you must do it alone.

ANNE

*(to Marlowe)* How can you help him? You're no locksmith.

KIT

The key is their stupidity.

THOMAS

You risk too much.

KIT

He's my friend. Wish me luck.

ANNE

God be with you.

KIT

Thomas?

THOMAS

I think it a bad idea.

KIT

You'd do the same for me.

Marlowe exits.

ANNE

*(to Thomas)* Would you?

THOMAS

What?

ANNE

Do the same for him?

THOMAS

He's my dearest friend, my brother, there's nothing I wouldn't do for him. But enough about him, would you care to take lunch on the terrace?

ANNE

What of the storm?

THOMAS

We've a few hours before it breaks.

ANNE

Lead the way.

He leads her off, but she SWOONS.

THOMAS

Anne! Are you all right?

ANNE

I... I'm sorry. *(recovering)* Yes, thank you, just a little light headed.

THOMAS

Let me help you. *(holds Anne's arm to steady her)*

ANNE

You're very kind. *(CLUTCHES her belly in pain)* I must use the bathroom.

THOMAS

Of course.

She exits.

THOMAS

*(calls off)* Poley!

Poley enters (40s), rough hewn and scarred.

THOMAS

Keep an eye on Marlowe.

POLEY

Yes, my lord.

Poley exits. Thomas goes to a draw, pulls out a sheath and blade, and straps it to his waist.

## SCENE TWELVE

Whitgift's office. The desk, the crucifix, the flag. Whitgift enters with his friend, Andrew Perne.

WHITGIFT

Havenhurst and Sir Francis are turning the council against me.

PERNE

I don't believe it's personal.

WHITGIFT

I've dedicated my life to building Elizabeth's church and now these... humanists would tear it asunder.

PERNE

I'm sure they think they work for the good of England.

WHITGIFT

England's good is its moral virtue before God.

PERNE

I wholly agree, but they are not the enemy.

WHITGIFT

You believe the best of people and are too easily beguiled.

PERNE

The path of least resistance.

WHITGIFT

Which is a holy trait, but the paths are full of snakes.

Whitgift sits at his desk and reads a paper. Perne paces agitated.

WHITGIFT

What's wrong?

PERNE

There are rumors.

WHITGIFT

What rumors?

PERNE

Circulating in Parliament. About us.

WHITGIFT

What do these rumors say?

PERNE

That we live under the same roof.

WHITGIFT

As many old colleagues do.

PERNE

*(deadly serious)* John, they go further. They're saying..

WHITGIFT

What?

PERNE

That we're lovers.

WHITGIFT

*(angry)* From where do these rumors stem?

PERNE

*(tentative)* Possibly the servants.

WHITGIFT

*(enraged)* My own staff? I'll have them flogged.

PERNE

Or maybe interlopers.

WHITGIFT

Where did you hear it?

PERNE

From Lord Shrewsbury.

WHITGIFT

It cannot be proved.

PERNE

You know that the accusation is enough.

WHITGIFT

I'll get to the root of this.

PERNE

I can't live without you, John.

WHITGIFT

I'll dig out the source and this shall be silenced .

He KISSES Perne on the lips.

Enter Anne, who sees them as they break apart.

ANNE

I'm sorry, I didn't mean to surprise you.

WHITGIFT

*(flustered)* Ah, my dear.

ANNE

Perhaps I should leave.

WHITGIFT

No, no, stay, I haven't seen you for months.

ANNE

What is this purge against the poets?

PERNE

I must be getting along. Goodbye, Anne, nice to see.

ANNE

Chancellor.

Perne exits.

WHITGIFT

Will you be staying for evening prayer, my dear?

ANNE

You're being evasive.

WHITGIFT

Because it is none of your concern.

ANNE

But they are our best thinkers.

WHITGIFT

How, when they steer from the one true faith.

ANNE

Then why Marlowe in particular?

WHITGIFT

Because he is a heretic.

ANNE

*(bitter)* And you are a zealot.

Whitgift raises his hand to strike her.

WHITGIFT

Stop your tongue, you shame yourself and our family name.

ANNE

No father, you shame yourself.

She storms off. Whitgift shakes with rage.

In the distance a church bells TOLLS.

## SCENE THIRTEEN

THUNDER in the distance. The jail cell indicated by a cot, a candle, and a barred window.

Kyd is tied to a rack, his wrists bound and stretched above his head. He is bloody and exhausted. The ropes are on pulleys with a ratchet.

Enter Jailer and a man covered by a hooded gown.

JAILER

Who'd you say you were?

MAN

*(gruff voice)* By order of Lord Havenhurst.

JAILER

Show me the order. *(the man presents a piece of paper, the jailer tries to read and gives it back)* You read it out.

MAN

*(reads)* This order of his most just and pious Lord Havenhurst, Chairman of the Star Chamber, alloweth the bearer visitation to all and sundry imprisoned.

JAILER

Fine, you got five minutes.

The Jailer exits. The man enters and removes the hood revealing Marlowe.

KIT

Tom.

KYD

*(weary)* Kit!

KIT

What have they done to you?

KYD

I didn't *(stutters)* t... tell...



KIT

Be calm. *(tries to untie the ropes)*

KYD

*(weak)* They'll be back. You must go.

KIT

Not without you.

KYD

*(groans)* What use us both dying?

KIT

*(struggles with the ropes)* Stay still.

WHITGIFT (OFF STAGE)

Has he confessed?

MAUNDER (OFF STAGE)

Not yet, your Grace.

KIT

*(tugs at the ropes)* It's stuck fast!

KYD

*(urgent)* Go, Kit, and live.

Marlowe heads to the door.

MAUNDER (OFF STAGE)

This way, your Grace.

KIT

Shit! *(looks around, hides behind a column)* Be brave, Tom.

KYD

*(lowers his head and whispers)* Our Father which art in heaven,  
hallowed be Thy name,  
Thy Kingdom come,  
Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

A THUNDER CLAP getting nearer.

Enter Maunder and Whitgift, holding a pamphlet. Behind the column, Marlowe listens.

WHITGIFT

Mister Kyd, are you ready to talk?

KYD

I *(stutters)* t... told you everything.

WHITGIFT

I think not.

KYD

*(crying)* Please...

WHITGIFT

I think you've been holding back.

KYD

No more... I can't...

WHITGIFT

*(waves the pamphlet)* Is this yours?

KYD

*(looks up groggy, throat dry and cracked)* No, sir.

WHITGIFT

*(reads)* "Religion was invented 'to keep men in awe', 'Christ was a bastard'. Familiar?

KYD

No... your Grace.

WHITGIFT

*(continues reading)* 'St John was bedfellow to Jesus', 'the sacrament ... would have been better administered in a Tobacco pipe'. Is it Marlowe's?

KYD

*(petrified)* I... I don't know.

Whitgift nods to Maunder who pulls the rope. The ratchet grinds round. The ropes tighten, stretching Kyd.

KYD

Ahhhhhhh.

Behind the column Marlowe squirms as Kyd screams. He pulls out a knife. He is about to rush out, but Maunder eases off on the rack and Kyd slumps.

MAUNDER

*(to Whitgift)* He's done.

Marlowe slips back behind the column.

WHITGIFT

*(to Kyd)* Why protect Marlowe? He'd betray you in a heartbeat.

Whitgift nods. Maunder starts to turn...

KYD

In the name of God!

WHITGIFT

You can be free.

KYD

I... I...

WHITGIFT

The pain can stop.

KYD

*(sobbing)* It's his.

WHITGIFT

Say his name.

Marlowe comes out from the column, knife raised, and moves behind Whitgift and Maunder.

KYD

*(almost unconscious)* Chri...

Marlowe, unseen, is about to stab Maunder in the back.

WHITGIFT

*(impatient)* Spit it out!

KYD

... Christ... *(stutters)* t... topher Marlowe.

Maunder releases the rope and Kyd falls limp. Marlowe steps back behind the column.

KIT

*(aside)* Their time will come.

WHITGIFT

You see, that wasn't so hard. *(to Maunder)* Find Marlowe. I want him on this rack by the morrow.

MAUNDER

What about him? *(re Kyd)*

WHITGIFT

He can hang for a while and repent.

Whitgift and Maunder exit. Marlowe comes out from behind the column and lifts Kyd's head.

KIT

Tom? *(Kyd GROANS)* Tom? *(Kyd collapses, unconscious. Marlowe kisses his forehead.)*  
God have mercy on you, my friend.

Marlowe exits.

A roll of THUNDER in the distance.

## SCENE FOURTEEN

The meeting room in Durham House, with the banner with the words "NUVOS ORDO SECLORUM".

Enter Thomas and Havenhurst.

THOMAS

It's not just our school that is being investigated. Harriot's in hiding. Ben Johnson's plays are banned and Nashe's house was raided. Even Drake's in disfavor and talks of leaving our shores.

HAVENHURST

The very center of England crumbles. I lament we did nothing sooner and have let the fanatics rise.

THOMAS

Perhaps the only place we can be free is in the New World?

HAVENHURST

Do not give up, Thomas, if we fasten together, we can fend off the zealots.

At the side of the room Marlowe enters.

THOMAS

Kit! Thank God, we thought you were taken.

KIT

Nearly.

THOMAS

And Kyd?

KIT

I watched them rack him.

THOMAS

Did he talk of the school?

KIT

No. Can you get me out of London?

THOMAS

You can stay at my estate at Scadbury until we think of somewhere else.

KIT

And Tom?

THOMAS

I'll arrange everything once you're out, if he doesn't betray us.

KIT

Why speak you of betrayal? I am not Kyd.

THOMAS

Of course you're not. You must make haste. I will come for you soon.

KIT

Thank you, my friend.

They hug.

The door BURSTS open. Enter Maunder with a soldier.

MAUNDER

I have a warrant for the arrest of Christopher Marlowe.

HAVENHURST

By who's authority?

MAUNDER

The Archbishop.

MAUNDER

*(to soldier)* Take him.

The soldier GRABS Marlowe.

KIT

*(struggles)* Unhand me villain!

THOMAS

*(to Havenhurst)* My lord, will you let this injustice proceed?

HAVENHURST

*(threatening)* Leave it alone.

THOMAS

But my lord?

MAUNDER

*(to Marlowe)* Move along.

THOMAS

*(to Marlowe)* Say nothing.

Maunder and the soldier push Marlowe out.

THOMAS

*(to Havenhurst)* I must go to my uncle.

HAVENHURST

Sir Francis and I are in agreement, Marlowe brought this on himself.

THOMAS

You talked to him?

HAVENHURST

I did. Once Marlowe's on the rack he'll say anything and endanger us all.

THOMAS

What of his service to England?

HAVENHURST

He's expendable. Cut him loose, Thomas, lest we get strangled on his rope.

THOMAS

Perhaps he could lose himself in France or Italy?

HAVENHURST

Do you want it hanging over you like a cloud? Never knowing if he's been found. Finish it, and if you cannot help, then do not impede.

THOMAS

*(sighs)* Yes, my lord.

HAVENHURST

*(heads for the door, turns back...)* One more thing.

THOMAS

My lord?

HAVENHURST

Get on Her Majesty's good side.

THOMAS

*(worried)* Has she expressed disfavor?

HAVENHURST

Not yet, but the cards are about to fall.

Havenhurst exits.

#### SCENE FIFTEEN

A prison cell, a cot and a barred window and a candle. A burly Jailer SHOVES Marlowe in, who tumbles. He is beaten, bruised, dishevelled.

JAILER

I wouldn't fall asleep if I were you.

KIT

Why not?

JAILER

Unless you want rats gnawing on your feet.

He laughs, spits, and exits. Marlowe goes to the barred window and stares out.

KIT

*(recites)* Stand still, you ever-moving spheres of heaven,  
That time may cease, and midnight never come;  
The stars move still, time runs, the clock will strike,  
The devil will come, and Faustus must be damn'd.



GROANING from the shadows.

KIT

Who's there?

KYD

*(cracked voice)* Kit?

KIT

Tom? *(takes the candle and sees Kyd laid up, shaking)*

KYD

*(voice cracked)* They... they broke me.

KIT

*(bravely)* No, no, my friend, you'll heal, in time.

KYD

*(almost in tears)* I couldn't help it.

KIT

Here, try to sit up?

KYD

I couldn't bear the pain.

KIT

Be calm, we'll get out yet.

KYD

I... I told them...

KIT

*(becoming afraid)* Told them what?

KYD

You're a heretic.

KIT

Oh Tom!

KYD

And a *(stutters)* t... traitor. *(sobbing)*

KIT

You are faultless, the sin is theirs.

KYD

I couldn't... help it.

KIT

Thomas will be here soon enough.

KYD

I won't last much longer.

KIT

Hold on, Tom, I have an idea. *(calls out)* Jailer. *(shouts)* Jailer!

The Jailer enters.

JAILER

What?

KIT

By the ring on your finger I notice you're married.

JAILER

So? What's it to you?

KIT

This ring, *(holds up a ring)* is a sapphire set in silver.

JAILER

Don't look like much.

KIT

T'would gain the affection of any wife.

JAILER

If it's real and not some mockery.

KIT

*(holds it up to the light)* Tis real indeed. Notice the tint of cobalt blue. Only the genuine stone shines thus.

JAILER

*(moves closer)* Let's have a look.

KIT

*(holds it away from the jailer)* T was made by a Turkish prince for his bride, but alas she died before their marriage could be consummated, and thus it was sold.

JAILER

*(intrigued)* It does sparkle brightly.

KIT

Deliver a message.

JAILER

*(snatches for it)* Give me it.

KIT

*(pulls it away)* After you've delivered.

JAILER

You may not have your head on your shoulders by the time I return, so I'll have it now or not at all.

He puts his hand out. Marlowe reluctantly gives the ring.  
The Jailer examines it and grins.

JAILER

What's the message?

KIT

Tell Lady Anne Havenhurst I'm imprisoned.

JAILER

That's it?

KIT

But do not let her husband know.

JAILER

Oh I see, a horndog and a heretic. And who shall I say you are?

KIT

Chrisotpher Marlowe.

JAILER

The writer?

KIT

The same.

JAILER

Tis a shame, a man like you in here.

KIT

Not for long, I hope. Be swift in your delivery.

JAILER

Like I said, it's a shame, I like your plays.

He exits. Marlowe turns to Kyd.

KIT

Tom, we'll be out soon.

KYD

*(croaks)* And then?

KIT

And then we shall escape England.

KYD

Italy. I always wanted to see Rome.

KIT

We shall, my friend.

## SCENE SIXTEEN

Lights up on Havenhurst House - indicated by a candelabra, chairs, and a table. Enter Anne and Susan with a lute, at the side of the stage.

SUSAN

*(plays the lute and sings) The Keeper would a-hunting go  
And under his arm he carried a bow  
All for to shoot at the merry little doe  
Among the leaves so green-o. (Anne sighs, Susan pauses) What's wrong, my lady?*

ANNE

*(a beat)* Can you keep a secret?

SUSAN

*(nervous)* I... I think so.

ANNE

You promise?

SUSAN

*(reluctant)* Yes mam, I promise.

ANNE

On your soul.

SUSAN

*(puts her hand on her chest)* I swear.

ANNE

I'm with child.

SUSAN

*(smiles)* Oh, my lady. *(a beat)* Are you sure?

ANNE

I have sickness, but cannot vomit.

SUSAN

Bleeding?

ANNE  
Cramps.

SUSAN  
But no blood?

ANNE  
None.

SUSAN  
When did you 'have relations', mam?

ANNE  
Two weeks since.

SUSAN  
*(sighs and smiles)* Then you are with child. Congratulations.

ANNE  
It's not a miracle of joy, but of shame.

SUSAN  
*(realizing)* Oh, mam. Tis a bastard?

ANNE  
And must be gone, and yet I dread to... Would you bear the child or would you end it?

SUSAN  
Not for me to say, mam, but is it a sin to end a life that has not yet begun?

ANNE  
Jesus, our saviour, says nothing against it.

SUSAN  
So it cannot be a sin, and you must do what's right for you, my lady, let the world take care of itself.

ANNE  
You're a wise woman.

SUSAN  
Just common sense.

ANNE

I wish the world had more of it.

SUSAN

I'll get you a potion from the apothecary that'll rid you of the mistake, and don't worry, mam, your husband shall know nothing of it.

ANNE

Thank you, Susan.

SUSAN

We women have to stick together.

Susan exits.

At the other side of the stage enter Havenhurst, visibly less well than before, in dressing gown, and on crutches, followed by Thomas.

HAVENHURST

Can we put this behind us now, Thomas?

THOMAS

Rest assured.

HAVENHURST

I won't broach failure and neither will your uncle.

THOMAS

You've made that perfectly clear.

HAVENHURST

Any mistake and it's your head on the block.

THOMAS

There'll be no mistakes.

As they approach Anne Havenhurst goes into a coughing fit.

ANNE

My lord, you should be resting. Your health...

HAVENHURST

*(snaps)* Nonsense, there's a kingdom to run.

ANNE

Good evening, Thomas. What brings you our home?

HAVENHURST

He's just leaving, aren't you, Thomas?

THOMAS

It shall be done, my Lord.

Thomas exits.

ANNE

What will?

HAVENHURST

The playwright.

ANNE

Marlowe?

HAVENHURST

You're still infatuated.

ANNE

No, my lord, I've forgotten him.

HAVENHURST

*(studies her for a moment, dubious)* You're a poor liar, and I won't be cozened again.

ANNE

I gave you my word, my lord.

HAVENHURST

See that you keep it.

He exits. Anne goes the window and stares out.



ANNE  
*(prays)* Lord give me strength.

Susan enters.

SUSAN  
My lady.

ANNE  
What is it?

SUSAN  
I was on my way out, when I came up on a man at the door.

ANNE  
What man?

SUSAN  
From the prison, a jailer, I think.

ANNE  
What does he want?

SUSAN  
*(whispers)* He says Christopher Marlowe seeks your aid.

ANNE  
How?

SUSAN  
He wants money, mam.

ANNE  
If I help him I risk all.

SUSAN  
And if you don't?

ANNE  
My heart will break.

SUSAN  
What shall I tell him?

ANNE  
Wait.

Anne exits. A moment later she returns with a pouch.

ANNE  
Three gold guineas should be enough.

SUSAN  
More than sufficient, mam.

ANNE  
And no word of this to my husband.

SUSAN  
On my life, mam.

Susan exits with the pouch.

Anne GROANS and doubles over, clutching her stomach.

ANNE  
*(writhes)* Good luck, Kit.

A thunder crack in the distance.

End of Act Three.

## ACT FOUR

## SCENE SEVENTEEN

The jail cell. Marlowe looks out of the barred window.  
Kyd tries to sit up.

The lock of the cell door TURNS.

KIT

Someone comes.

KYD

The jailer to release us?

KIT

I knew my lady would come through.

The door creaks open. Poley enters.

KIT

Poley!

POLEY

You were expecting someone else?

KIT

Where's Thomas?

POLEY

He'll meet us at the dock. A ship will take you abroad. I know not the details.

KYD

*(tries to stand)* I... I can't go.

KIT

Come on, Tom, get up.

POLEY

We're not waiting.

KIT

I'm not leaving him.

POLEY

*(looks out of the door)* Then make it quick, while the way is clear.

KIT

*(to Kyd)* Can you stand?

KYD

*(tries to stand, but his legs give)* Go without me.

KIT

*(braces him)* Come on, get up. *(to Poley)* Help me.

Poley reluctantly grabs Kyd's other arm. Then he jumps back in horror.

POLEY

*(snaps)* Put him down and stand away.

KIT

I'll can't carry him alone.

POLEY

*(barks)* Looks at his hands. They're not blisters. They're boils and pustulations.

KIT

*(looks at Kyd's hand)* Oh Tom.

KYD

*(bleary)* What?

POLEY

For Christ sake, leave him, he's got the fucking pestilence. Who knows, we might be infected. *(to Kyd)* You bastard!

He moves to punch Kyd. Marlowe BLOCKS him.

KIT

Do not touch him.

POLEY

*(backs away)* You're right, he's contaminated.

Kyd looks at his hands and groans pitifully. Marlowe stands back.

KIT

*(desperate)* Perhaps you can follow?

POLEY

*(barks)* Come on, he'll be dead soon.

KYD

Save yourself.

Poley exits.

KIT

*(to Kyd)* *Sit Deus vobiscum.* *(makes the sign of the cross and exits)*

KYD

God be with you too, my friend.

#### SCENE EIGHTEEN

The sound of seagulls squawking. A dock side indicated by piled crates. A pallid moon above. Fog fills the stage.

Enter Poley and Marlowe.

KIT

Tis a hunter's moon, which they say forbodes badly.

POLEY

Tis mere superstition.

KIT

And yet my stomach turns as if someone walked across my grave.

POLEY

I thought you were a man of reason.

KIT

Reason without feeling is but an empty shell. How long must we stay here.

POLEY

Not long now. I'll ensure the meeting place is secure. If anyone comes, stick to the shadows, don't be seen.

Poley exits.

Marlowe waits. Rolling THUNDER in the near distance.

In the thick mist a figure appears.

KIT

Who's that?

MAN

You state first.

KIT

A traveler. And you?

MAN

A tradesman.

KIT

Show yourself.

The Collector appears through the fog, wheeling his cart, now piled high wearing the grotesque beaked mask.

COLLECTOR

It's you again, the writer fellow. *(takes the mask off)*

KIT

The collector.

COLLECTOR

*(relieved)* I thought you might be a brigand come to rob me.

KIT

And I thought you an apparition.

COLLECTOR

*(laughs)* Glad to say I'm still flesh and bone.

KIT

And I'm glad to see a friendly face.

COLLECTOR

What brings you to this Hades?

KIT

Why call you it that? Tis not the underworld.

COLLECTOR

But is damned nonetheless. Look yonder in the river.

KIT

*(peering out)* I don't see...

COLLECTOR

Those dark shapes.

KIT

*(peering out)* What are they?

COLLECTOR

Bodies.

KIT

Good God! There are dozens.

COLLECTOR

Hundreds. The pits are full, so we dump 'em in there. Too many people, that's the problem.

KIT

It's a river of death and a morbid job you do.

COLLECTOR

Then life's morbid, for what is it but a brief dance and then - poof - we're gone.

The Collector gets a knife out.

KIT

That knife?

COLLECTOR

What of it?

KIT

I'll trade my coat for it.

COLLECTOR

*(skeptical)* A coat for a blade?

KIT

It's gold stitched, *(he takes it off and gives it)* and worth ten times more.

COLLECTOR

*(tries the coat on, admiring himself)* Nice, but it's for a gentleman. I have no use of it.

KIT

Sell it for ten knives.

Marlowe takes the knife.

THUNDER off stage.

Thomas, Poley, and Frizer (30s), gruff and roughly dressed, enter from the other side through the fog. Thomas carries a satchel.

KIT

*(hides the knife)* Thomas.

THOMAS

I brought your writings. *(gives him the satchel)*

KIT

I thought they were lost.

THOMAS

I'd never let that happen. *(to Poley)* Have the arrangements been made?



POLEY

Yes, sir.

KIT

*(aside to Thomas)* Who's he? *(re: Frizer)*

THOMAS

*(aside)* One of my men, in case of... surprises.

Marlowe regards Frizer warily.

POLEY

Sir, may I have a word?

THOMAS

Excuse me a moment, Kit.

Thomas and Poley move aside and whisper. Marlowe turns away from Frizer and slips the knife inside his shirt.

Thomas and Poley return.

THOMAS

Were you tortured?

KIT

I'm unharmed.

THOMAS

So they extracted nothing from you? You didn't mention me or the school.

KIT

You don't trust me?

THOMAS

*(sharp)* Did you or didn't you?

KIT

*(adamant)* No, I said nothing.

THOMAS

*(regards Marlowe)* You wouldn't lie to me?

KIT

Thomas, you're my dearest friend.

POLEY

*(to Thomas)* He's lying.

KIT

*(to Thomas)* What would I gain?

A CLAP of THUNDER and a FLASH OF LIGHTNING.

POLEY

Time for the reckoning, my Lord.

Poley approaches Marlowe, who backs away.

KIT

Thomas?

THOMAS

I'm sorry, Kit, I cannot stop what you've started.

Marlowe backs away as Poley and Frizer approach.

KIT

*(to Thomas)* And what of the values of your School? Just empty words?

THOMAS

The School will continue and the Enlightenment will grow.

KIT

Though it be founded in blood and betrayal.

THOMAS

It's for the greater good, Kit.

Marlowe backs away as Poley and Frizer corner him.

KIT

Thomas! I'm not what you think.

THOMAS

I cannot risk it. You must see that?

Marlowe pulls out his BLADE.

KIT

Then do your worst.

POLEY

Put the knife down.

KIT

Take it from me if you dare. I'll not go without a fight.

Poley indicates to Frizer, who draws his blade and moves in on Marlowe, boxing him in.

POLEY

We can end this quickly or we can make a mess.

Frizer MOVES IN on Marlowe. Marlowe SWIPES and Frizer REELS back.

KIT

Come closer and I'll dispatch thee.

Poley PLUNGES his blade and SLICES Marlowe across the cheek.

POLEY

Gotcha.

Marlowe clutches his face, pouring BLOOD. He SWIPES almost catching Poley. Poley jumps back.

POLEY

Rush him.

Frizer moves to tackle. Marlowe PUNCHES him. Frizer REELS back and Marlowe DRIVES his blade into Frizer's gut. Frizer doubles over and falls, groaning.

Marlowe turns and puts the point of his dagger at Thomas' throat.

KIT

*(to Thomas)* Tell him to back away or you'll taste the point of my blade.

THOMAS

*(to Poley)* Step back.

POLEY

*(to Kit)* Where would you go? No where's safe now.

THOMAS

It's true, Kit. I would let it be, but they will not let you go alive.

Poley moves in. Marlowe SHOVES Thomas into Poley.

THOMAS

*(to Poley)* Get him.

Poley CHARGES. Marlowe DRIVES his knife down. Poley BLOCKS him. They STRUGGLE. Marlowe pivots and Poley falls. Marlowe raises his dagger over Poley's chest about to strike.

In a FLASH of LIGHTNING Thomas steps forward and STABS Marlowe in the back.

Marlowe pauses, shocked and STAGGERS and weakly swpies his knife. Thomas easily steps aside.

THOMAS

I'm sorry, my friend.

A thunder CLAP in the distance.

Marlowe COLLAPSES and GROANS, bleeding out.

I... loved... you.

KIT

Thomas kneels down to Marlowe in a pool of blood widening around him.

And I you, but I cannot leave you in their hands.

THOMAS

Come, sir, before you're discovered.

POLEY

We are our own hell, Thomas.

KIT

Sssh.

THOMAS

Thomas SLIDES THE KNIFE INTO MARLOWE'S NECK.

Good night, sweet poet.

THOMAS

Marlowe GURGLES BLOOD.

And rest assured, I will not let your writing die with you.

THOMAS

Thomas hugs him as Marlowe TWITCHES and SHUDDERS and becomes STILL.

We must go, my lord.

POLEY

*(snaps)* A moment. *(KISSES Marlowe)* Farewell.

THOMAS

*(urgent)* My lord.

POLEY

THOMAS

*(stands and starts to leave) (to Poley and Frizer) I'll see you both at Scadbury.*

A sound off stage.

POLEY

*(looking back) A soldier's almost upon us.*

THOMAS

Remember the story - he was killed in a brawl in a tavern.

POLEY

Yes, sir.

Thomas exits. Poley helps Frizer up and they stagger off.

Lights down to Marlowe's body...

...then down to black.

#### SCENE NINETEEN

Whitgift's office, the cross, the flag, the desk. Whitgift at the desk. Enter Maunder.

WHITGIFT

Did you find him?

MAUNDER

Yes, your Grace, but there's a problem.

WHITGIFT

What?

MAUNDER

He was, er, killed in a brawl in a Deptford.

WHITGIFT

By whom?

MAUNDER

Apparently, Poley and Frizer.

WHITGIFT

So this is Havenhurst's doing. Did you see it yourself?

MAUNDER

No, your Grace.

WHITGIFT

Were there witnesses?

MAUNDER

*(sheepish)* No.

WHITGIFT

Of course. And Thomas?

MAUNDER

No sign of him.

WHITGIFT

The weasel slips away again, but I'll have him yet.

MAUNDER

What now?

WHITGIFT

We shall press something more out of Thomas Kyd. Soften him up, I'll be there shortly.

MAUNDER

Yes, your Grace, he'll be *(laughs)* good and tender.

Maunder heads for the door. As he exits, Sir Francis and a soldier enter.

SIR FRANCIS

*(to Maunder)* Stand aside, sergeant. Archbishop, the arrest of Thomas Kyd and Christopher Marlowe has not gone unnoticed.

WHITGIFT

Sir Francis, what seems to be the trouble?

SIR FRANCIS

You have persecuted good Englishmen and our best minds.

WHITGIFT

I did my duty. They are enemies of the church, Sir Francis.

SIR FRANCIS

So Church and State become one?

WHITGIFT

As it should be.

SIR FRANCIS

In your opinion, but Her Majesty has a particular disposition to Marlowe's work. She reviewed your edict and she says you acted without her consent. Your Code of Conformity has been revoked.

WHITGIFT

This is yours and Havenhurt's doing?

SIR FRANCIS

It was Her Majesty's command.

WHITGIFT

The bishops will hear of this and there'll be hell to pay.

SIR FRANCIS

*(to Maunder and soldier)* Give us a moment. *(Maunder and the soldier exit)* I have received information that you harbor 'unholy relations' with Chancellor Perne.

WHITGIFT

*(becomes pale)* Vindictive slander. Where did you get this information?

SIR FRANCIS

I have my sources.

WHITGIFT

You spy on your fellow dignitaries.



SIR FRANCIS

Archbishop, I care not what you do in private, your 'affections' are your affair, but if it were to become known publicly.

WHITGIFT

You wouldn't dare.

SIR FRANCIS

Wouldn't I? Your office has been moved to Whitehall, where we can keep an eye on you. *(calls out)* Officer. *(the soldier and Maunder enter)* *(to soldier)* Escort the Archbishop out.

The soldier moves towards Whitgift.

WHITGIFT

Maunder, stop him.

MAUNDER

But your Grace, the queen...

WHITGIFT

I am your patron.

MAUNDER

*(lowers his sword and backs away)* And she is my liege.

SIR FRANCIS

*(to Maunder)* England thanks you, Sergeant. Now go and release Thomas Kyd, *(gives a paper)* and deliver this to the Rose. It's an order to reopen the theaters.

MAUNDER

Yes, sir. *(frowning at Whitgift)*

SIR FRANCIS

What are you waiting for? *(Maunder runs off)* Archbishop, shall we?

They exit.

## SCENE TWENTY

The Collector wheels his cart on. Marlowe's dead body center stage, white and stiff with rigor mortis.

COLLECTOR

*(sings) Weep no more, thou sorry boy;  
Love's pleased and anger'd with a toy  
Love a thousand passion brings,  
Laughs and weeps, and sighs and sings.  
If she smiles, he dancing goes,  
And thinks not on his future woes:  
If she chide with angry eye,  
Sits down, and sighs "Ah me, I die!"*

Enter Lill, scantily clad, dressed to entice.

LILL

Is that him?

COLLECTOR

Aye.

He stops the cart. She regards Marlowe's body laid out in a pool of blood.

LILL

Poor lad, I had a soft spot for you.

COLLECTOR

A rare spark he was, but his talent's cut short, betrayed, and slain, and his life ended on the whim of a lord.

LILL

Why? What did he do to them?

COLLECTOR

He spoke truth to power.

LILL

And what does he have to show for it? Nothing. Just another body for the grave.

## COLLECTOR

Which is where we all end up, but while most stumble blindly through life, some burn bright, and leave behind their light. (*hoists Marlowe's body up*) Up you come, lad.

He slides Marlowe onto the cart. Lill kisses Marlowe on the forehead.

## LILL

Goodbye, Kit. I'll miss you.

Lill exits and the Collector wheels the cart off, singing..

## COLLECTOR

*Then weep no more, thou sorry boy,  
Turn thy tears to weeping joy.  
Sigh no more "Ah me! I die!"  
But dance, and sing, and ti-hy cry.*

A CLAP of thunder. A FLASH of lightning.

Lights down.

## SCENE TWENTY-ONE

Henslowe's office, indicated by a chair, table, and masks on the wall. Henslowe at his desk. Enter Judith.

## JUDITH

You should see it out there. We're full to the rafters. Everyone's here; lords, ladies, gentlemen, even the mayor.

## HENSLOWE

Didn't I tell you we'd be back?

## JUDITH

Yes, you did, Phillip.

Thomas and Anne enter at the side of the stage. She carries a manuscript. They approach the office door.

THOMAS

My condolences on your husband's demise, he was a great man.

ANNE

But no great loss to me.

THOMAS

*(surprised)* How are you faring alone?

ANNE

Actually, never better.

She wavers, unsteady.

THOMAS

Are you all right, my lady?

ANNE

I'm fine. *(looks down and pats her stomach)*

THOMAS

Is that what I think it is? *(she smiles)* By the gleam in your eye I'm guessing it's not Havenhurst's?

ANNE

His urge was greater than *(raises her little finger limply)* his ability.

THOMAS

Then out of tragedy comes joy.

ANNE

Thomas, I'll need a husband.

THOMAS

You're not wasting time I see.

ANNE

A partner, so to speak.

THOMAS

Then not for love?

ANNE

More a business proposition. As a woman of wealth I'll be preyed upon.

THOMAS

Yes, half of the court will be on you like sharks.

ANNE

But with the right man at my side I could accomplish much.

THOMAS

You're an intriguing woman, my Lady.

ANNE

*(smiles)* You may call me Anne.

He takes her arm and they enter the office. Henslowe at his desk.

HENSLOWE

Lord Walsingham, always a pleasure. My Lady.

THOMAS

It's good to see the theaters open again.

HENSLOWE

It was touch and go there, but God bless the queen, our license is restored.

THOMAS

And with the plague in recession it should be plain sailing.

HENSLOWE

We can only hope so, my lord.

THOMAS

What's your first production?

HENSLOWE

Marlowe's *Faustus*.

THOMAS

Splendid. His best.

HENSLOWE

*“Was this the face that launch'd a thousand ships,  
And burnt the topless towers of Ilium...”*

THOMAS

*(to Anne) “... Sweet Helen, make me immortal with a kiss.  
Here will I dwell, for heaven is in these lips,  
And all is dross that is not Helen.”*

HENSLOWE

He wrote a mighty line.

THOMAS

What he began Johnson, Fletcher, and Shakespeare continue and we are all the richer for it.

ANNE

But alas, poor Kit, what chance had he?

THOMAS

Meaning?

ANNE

He was a poet amongst jackals.

HENSLOWE

*(laughs)* He was no innocent, my lady.

THOMAS

Who is?

HENSLOWE

Wisely said my Lord, for none of us are without sin.

THOMAS

Perhaps we should join forces, Henslowe, perhaps I should become your patron?

ANNE

We both will.

THOMAS

In Kit's memory.

JUDITH

How much are you talking?

THOMAS

Enough to buy The Globe, where you can perform Kit's plays.

HENSLOWE

Absolutely, my lord, they're more popular than ever.

ANNE

And we could commission new plays.

HENSLOWE

*(overcome)* Goodness, my lord, my lady.

THOMAS

Is that a yes?

JUDITH

Yes, definitely yes. We'll present you a plan, won't we, Philip?

HENSLOWE

*(to Thomas)* We'll have it all drawn out for you, my lord, costs, returns, overheads, everything.

THOMAS

I believe this could be the start of a wonderful partnership.

HENSLOWE

*(gleeful)* Yes, my lord, yes, yes.

A bell RINGS off stage.

JUDITH

Sir Thomas, Lady Walsingham, your box is ready. *Faustus* is about to begin.

ANNE

*(hands Henslowe a script)* Will you take a look at this?

HENSLOWE

What is it, my lady?

ANNE

Something I've written.

HENSLOWE

A play?

ANNE

My first. It's about the struggle of women.

HENSLOWE

I look forward to reading it, mam.

THOMAS

Anne, let's take our place.

ANNE

Keep up the good work, Henslowe, for where there's art there's life.

Thomas and Lady Anne exit arm in arm. Henslowe takes a 'devil' mask from the wall and puts it on.

HENSLOWE

*(to Judith)* How do I look?

JUDITH

Wicked.

HENSLOWE

Come, my dear, let's give them a show to remember.

They exit.

Lights down to the masks on the wall, then down to black.

End play.