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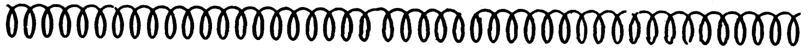
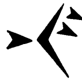


A Full-Length Play

BINGO

BY EDWARD BOND



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For

JANE HOWELL

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INTRODUCTION

Shakespeare had two daughters. Susanna is buried near him under stone in the chancel of the parish church, Judith was buried under grass outside in the churchyard and her grave is lost. Perhaps that sums up the difference between them. Shakespeare's opinions about them aren't known, but it seemed to me that his daughters' lives might have reflected those opinions: Susanna social, well-married and affluent, and Judith obscure, overshadowed by her sister, married late to the unsuccessful publican of The Cage and deserted in her old age. Perhaps being brought up under Shakespeare's incisive perception and judgment shaped the whole of their lives.

Judith is the only daughter in the play. I gave the more comforting and strengthening role that I think Susanna played in his life to an old woman servant. I did this for my own dramatic convenience. The old woman's son is a victim of Shakespeare's business world. By making her close to Shakespeare I had a bridge between the two elements of the play, but I kept what I think is the true psychological situation: one woman (Susanna, or in the play the old woman) was close to him, and another (Judith, and probably also his wife) was estranged.

I've done something similar with my account of the enclosure which involved Shakespeare. Combe represents several men, and the undertaking signed in the second scene by Combe and Shakespeare was in fact between Shakespeare and a representative of the enclosers called Replingham (though Combe confirmed it later). Shakespeare's last binge was with Jonson and Drayton. Only Jonson is shown in the play. I've also altered some dates. For example, Shakespeare's theatre was burned down in 1613, not 1616. I made all these changes for dramatic convenience. To recreate in an audience the impact

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scattered events had on someone's life you often have to concentrate them. I mention all this because I want to protect the play from petty criticism. It is based on the material historical facts so far as they're known, and on psychological truth so far as I know it. The consequences that follow in the play follow from the facts, they're not polemical inventions. Of course, I can't insist that my description of Shakespeare's death is true. I'm like a man who looks down from a bridge at the place where an accident has happened. The road is wet, there's a skid mark, the car's wrecked, and a dead man lies by the road in a pool of blood. I can only put the various things together and say what probably happened. Orthodox critics usually assume that Shakespeare would have driven a car so well that he'd never have an accident. My account rather flatters Shakespeare. If he didn't end in the way shown in the play, then he was a reactionary blimp or some other fool. The only more charitable account is that he was unaware or senile. But I admit that I'm not really interested in Shakespeare's true biography in the way a historian might be. Part of the play is about the relationship between any writer and his society.

*

Shakespeare created Lear, who is the most radical of all social critics. But Lear's insight is expressed as madness or hysteria. Why? I suppose partly because that was the only coherent way it could have been expressed at that time. Partly also because if you understand so much about suffering and violence, the partiality of authority, and the final innocence of all defenseless things, <u>and yet</u> live in a time when you can do nothing about it -- then you feel the suffering you describe, and your writing mimics that suffering. When you write on that level you must tell

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the truth. A lie makes you the hangman's assistant. It betrays the victim and this is intolerable -- because you are mimicking the victim, and the most important thing you know is the innocence you share with him. So if you lie the world stops being sane, there is no justice to condemn suffering, and no difference between guilt and innocence -- and only the mad know how to live with so much despair. Art is always sane. It always insists on the truth, and tries to express the justice and order that are necessary to sanity but are usually destroyed by society. All imagination is political. It has the urgency of passion, the force of appetite, the self-authenticity of pain or happiness -- imagination is a desire that makes an artist create. The truths of imagination are strictly determined and necessary. They aren't "revealed" to artists, they have to work and train and learn so that they become skilled at discovering them. But every artist often feels that what he's created is "right" and he's not free to alter it. It's life that in comparison seems arbitrary and random -- because society is usually based on injustice or expediency but art is the expression of moral sanity. Philistinism is so shocking because it assumes that, on the contrary, creative imagination is arbitrary and random, a self-satisfying game, mere fantasy -- instead of being vital to human development. And of course, what artists most frequently lack is enough of this creative imagination. Or perhaps they only play it down because they're told art is for the rich and intellectual, that science is work but art only luxury or play. Perhaps also because many people do in fact "exist" without art. Well, they've only had to do so in modern industrial societies and that's one reason why these societies are stagnant and inhuman. And there are also artists who shut themselves up in private fantasies. What they create has to be interpreted by an extra-artistic language. Their verbal or graphic images have no

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force, it's as if a spectator had to look up every word or sign in a dictionary. But imagination isn't random fantasy. The artist's imagination connects him to his audience's world just as much as his knowledge does. Because Jane Austen's imagination was weaker than her knowledge she could avoid writing about the Napoleonic wars -- except perhaps as one cause of her general fear of poverty. But as she needed to express the objective truth about her characters -- that is her need for moral sanity -- this deepened her creative imagination. In *Persuasion* she's already started to write about the experience of poverty and not just her fear of it, and if she'd lived longer she might well have written about war. Writers who don't develop in this way become shut up in private fantasies, experiments in style, unrewarding obscurities -- they become trivial and reactionary.

Shakespeare's plays show this need for sanity and its political expression, justice. But how did he live? His behavior as a property-owner made him closer to Goneril than Lear. He supported and benefited from the Goneril-society -- with its prisons, workhouses, whipping, starvation, mutilation, pulpit-hysteria and all the rest of it.

An example of this is his role in the Welcombe enclosure. A large part of his income came from rents (or tithes) paid on common fields at Welcombe near Stratford. Some important landowners wanted to enclose these fields -- for the reasons given in the play -- and there was a risk that the enclosure would affect Shakespeare's rents. He could side either with the landowners or with the poor who would lose their land and livelihood. He sided with the landowners. They gave him a guarantee against loss -- and this is not a neutral document because it implies that should the people fighting the enclosers come to him for help he would refuse it. Well, the town did write to him for help and he did nothing. The struggle is quite

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well documented and there's no record of opposition from Shakespeare. He may have doubted that the enclosers would succeed, but at best this means he sat at home with his guarantee while others made the resistance that was the only way to stop them. They were stopped for a time. The fields were not finally enclosed till 1775.

Lear divided up his land at the beginning of the play, when he was arbitrary and unjust -- not when he was shouting out his truths on the open common.

*

The subtitle is "Scenes of money and death." We live in a closed society where you need money to live. You earn it, borrow it, or steal it. Criminals, and hermits or drop-outs, depend on others who earn money -- there's no greenwood to escape into any more, it's been cut down. We have no natural rights, only rights granted and protected by money. Money provides food, shelter, security, education, entertainment, the ground we walk on, the air we breathe, the bed we lie in. People come to think of these things as products of money, not of the earth or human relationships, and finally as the way of getting more money to get more things. Money has its own laws and conventions, and when you live by money you must live by these. To get money you must behave like money. I don't mean only that money creates certain attitudes or traits in people, it forces certain behavior on them. Charity seems an argument against this, but in fact it proves it. If you have a lot of money you might give some of it to the poor, or some pictures to the nation. But you won't give all you have because then you'd have no reserve, no one would work for you for wages and so you couldn't collect more money. Your actions aren't finally controlled by human generosity (at best they're only prompted by that) but by

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your selfish need. The money you keep back isn't morally neutral -- like enough clothes or food -- because you use it to influence the lives of other people who are also trapped by money. We're wrong when we assume we're free to use money in human ways. When livelihood and dignity depend on money, human values are replaced by money values. Certainly that's what's happened in our commercial, technological society. Money destroys the effect of human values in our society because consumer demand can't grow fast enough to maintain profits and full employment while human values are effective. A consumer society depends on its members being avaricious, ostentatious, gluttonous, envious, wasteful, selfish and inhuman. Officially we teach morality but if we all became "good" the economy would collapse. Affluent people can't afford ten commandments.

Money is an important social tool. It's the means of exchange and of accumulating the surplus necessary to create modern industry. But we've reached a point where money isn't used to remove poverty but to create and satisfy artificial needs so that consumption will maintain profits and industrial activity. Keynes said that to maintain effective demand in an economy it would be better to pay men for "digging holes in the ground" rather than that they should be unemployed, but he added ironically that he presumed a "sensible community" would find something more socially useful for them to do. Well, a lot of the trash we produce for civilized consumption is far more silly and dangerous than holes in the ground. And that's only concerned with keeping society running -- the far more important and difficult work of making it more civilized is mostly ignored. We think we live in an age of science, but it's also an age of alchemy: we try to turn gold into human values.

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It seems that sometimes people can be made to behave badly with frightening ease and rapidity, but it only seems so. Their awareness of human values doesn't simply vanish. People have faults and, as in all evolving species, weaknesses -- but human values are the most enduring things we have, stronger than our rational minds. We have the need and right to protect ourselves and our families, and in a crisis we help those we know, not strangers -- but it isn't easy for us to do this at others' expense or to make others suffer. It's difficult for human beings to be unkind, and unpleasant to be arrogant. There's always a reason for aggression, and the only effective weapon against it is to remove the cause. Fear is a lack of understanding, and the only way to remove it is by reason and reassurance. Even the hate that comes from fear and aggression begins as a passion for justice. That isn't a paradox. Why did Shylock ask for his enemy's flesh? Because his own had been spat on.

There are two main sorts of political aggression. The first is the aggression of the weak against the strong, the hungry against the overfed. That's easy to understand. The strong are unjust, and to survive and get elementary rights many people are forced to act aggressively. The second aggression is of the strong against the weak. How can an American drop bombs on peasants in a jungle if, as I said, a sense of human values is part of his nature? It takes a lot of effort, years of false education and lies, indignity, shabby poverty, economic insecurity -- or the insecurity of dishonest privilege -- before men will do that. The ruling morality teaches them they are violent, dirty and destructive, that the only decent course open to civilized man is to act as his own jailer, and that men in jungles are even worse because they're

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as savage as animals <u>and</u> as cunning as men -- history proves it. So he drops bombs because he believes that if the peasant ever rowed a canoe across the Pacific and drove an ox cart over America till he came to his garden, he'd steal his vegetables and rape his grandmother -- history proves it. And history like the Bible will prove anything.

An old fascist (or an old miser) is always bitter and cynical. Not because his conscience troubles him! -- but because he lives in conflict with his fundamental sense of human values. Men can only be content when they live in peace and shared respect with other men. It seems odd to say these things in a century of fascism and brutality, but the world is unhappy and violent not because we're cursed with original sin <u>or</u> original aggression, but because it is unjust. The world is not absurd, it is finally a place for men to be sane and rational in.

Of course demands for justice sometimes conflict. But the reason these conflicts are hard to resolve is that the "judge" is often more guilty than the other parties. Most established social orders are not means of defending justice but of defending social injustice. That's why compromises inside a nation or between nations are difficult to get, and why law-and-order societies are morally responsible for the terrorism and crime they provoke.

*

I wrote *Bingo* because I think the contradictions in Shakespeare's life are similar to the contradictions in us. He was a "corrupt seer" and we are a "barbarous civilization." Because of that our society could destroy itself. We believe in certain values but our society only works by destroying them, so that our daily lives are a denial of our hopes. That makes our world absurd and often it makes our own species

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hateful to us. Morality is reduced to surface details and trivialities. Is it so easy to live like that? Or aren't we surrounded by frustration and bitterness, cynicism and inefficiency, and an inner feeling of weakness that comes from knowing we waste our energy on things that finally can't satisfy us? That's true of all parts of our society, from the theatre of the absurd to the broken windows of a youth club. It's not so odd, then, to say that people are only happy when their lives are based on human values. _If_ we survive we have only two possible futures. Firstly, as technological ants engineered from birth to fit into a rigid society. Or secondly, as people who live consistently by the values that are part of their nature.

*

You can't do much by deciding to be happier, saner or wiser. That partly depends on society, and you can only change your life by changing society and the role you have to play in it. If, for example, society encourages greed and yet is based on the poverty of other societies, you can understand that without any "enlightenment." What sort of society do we want? The earlier, simpler culture related closely to the land has gone, and not enough people remember its skills well enough to teach them -- and anyway those skills were too simple to support the huge masses of people who've grown up in an industrial culture with a highly technological relationship to the environment. So we have to make sense of our technological culture and divorce it from rampant commercialism. A factory isn't bad in itself. It depends how many other factories there are, what they make and how they're organized. Finally the only way to answer these questions is for the people who work in the factories to answer them.

Some people still think workers are apes who'd

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swing round in trees all day if someone else didn't give them orders. They ask, how on earth could workers organize this mess? But the question is, how can we get out of the mess? That's why it's the lack of democracy that's so inefficient. Our problems can't be solved by more information, more control, more social engineering, more compulsion, more rewards, more expertise. Experts can only reshuffle the elements of the mess or add more elements. The faults of technology are probably political as much as technological, but what always happens is this: a mess isn't solved by removing its cause but by adding a new apparatus to contain or redistribute the mess, and then a new apparatus to deal with the new apparatus. (Transport is a perfect example of what happens.) There is no structural logic, no way of getting organizational simplicity, no real evolutionary discipline. Technology is a way of solving problems, but the total technological culture will break down from time to time, perhaps even more often than other cultures do, because there's no structural integration between its parts, and various technologies are always in conflict. There is chaos because machines and technology are given priority over people. The only way to get a workable simplicity is for people themselves to decide how they want to live and work and what sort of communities they want to be in. Then people will not be subordinated to more and more machines.

Politicians have talked about democracy for three hundred years and now people have come to expect it. The myth has gone out of state and authority, the social structure of authority doesn't impress or intimidate any more. You see, if someone's authority ultimately derives from god, that impresses. But an expert doesn't have that sort of moral charisma. There's no reason why he shouldn't work for you. Well, if no one believes in god any more how can he

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run the world efficiently? Most people no longer believe that if god's son came down to earth again he'd be better advised to send him to Eton. Most working people no longer believe there are other people who know better than they do how they should live and work. That doesn't mean that everything they will do is practical common sense; the essential thing about acting responsibly is to have responsibility. Then you learn from experience, you learn what you don't know and what education you need. And the time to take responsibility is when the people who've already got it can't make it work -- and that's our situation now. Our problems won't vanish and we won't step straight into a rational society. But rational processes will be brought back into society and problems can be solved instead of being compounded. We have to choose a new purpose for society, a new culture. There is a counter-culture ready and it's been developing for hundreds of years: it is democracy.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Most biographies of Shakespeare barely mention the Welcombe enclosure, but all the documents and a full commentary are given in *William Shakespeare* by E. K. Chambers (2 vols).

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Bingo was first presented at the Northcott Theatre, Devon, with the following cast:

SHAKESPEARE . . . . *Bob Peck*

OLD MAN . . . . *Paul Jesson*

SON . . . . *David Howey*

WILLIAM COMBE . . . . *David Roper*

BEN JONSON . . . . *Rhys McConnochie*

JEROME . . . . *Derek Fuke*

WALLY . . . . *Martin Duncan*

FIRST OLD WOMAN . . . . *Joanna Tope*

JUDITH . . . . *Sue Cox*

YOUNG WOMAN . . . . *Yvonne Edgell*

JOAN . . . . *Margot Leicester*

SECOND OLD WOMAN . . . . . *Margot Leicester*

Directed by Jane Howell and John Dove
Designed by Hayden Griffin
Lighting by Nick Chelton

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SYNOPSIS

PART ONE

One:	Garden
Two:	Garden
Three:	Hill

PART TWO

Four:	Inn
Five:	Fields
Six:	Room

There is an interval after Part One.

Warwickshire 1615 and 1616.

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Part One

ONE

SCENE: Garden. A hedge runs across the top of the stage. At L is a passageway opening through it and at far R, an opening with a low gate leading to the road. There is a bench. The house is unseen, off L.)

AT RISE OF CURTAIN: Emptiness and silence. SHAKESPEARE comes in. He carries a sheet of paper. He sits on the bench. He silently reads part of the paper. An OLD MAN comes through the gap in the hedge. He cuts the hedge with shears as he comes through and goes on cutting this side of the hedge. Silence. JUDITH comes out of the house L and enters the garden. The men don't react. The OLD MAN goes on cutting.)

JUDITH (to SHAKESPEARE). Isn't it cold for you? (Slight pause.) Mr. Combe's here. (SHAKESPEARE nods. JUDITH looks round and then goes back into the house. SHAKESPEARE lets his hand hang down with the paper still in it. Silence.)
OLD MAN (contentedly). Last toime this year.

(Silence. The OLD MAN goes on cutting. A YOUNG WOMAN comes along the road and

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stops at the gate. She smiles archly at the OLD MAN.)

YOUNG WOMAN. How yo' now? (The OLD MAN nods at SHAKESPEARE. The YOUNG WOMAN sees him. Politely:) Nicet mornin', sir, thank the lord. (SHAKESPEARE nods. The YOUNG WOMAN holds out her hand. A moment's silence.) Just a little summat. Yo' yont notice.

OLD MAN. Where yo' from, gal?

YOUNG WOMAN. On my way through.

OLD MAN. Where to?

YOUNG WOMAN. My Bristol aunt. My people died lately. My aunt wed a farmer -- they'll hev work for us. (She turns to go.) I yont be no trouble.

SHAKESPEARE. Stay, stay. (She stops.) You'd rather have money, not food?

YOUNG WOMAN. Ah, that I would. (SHAKESPEARE stands and goes out L to the house.) Hev he gone for authority? (The OLD MAN smiles at her. He goes to the gate and opens it.) Is that all roight? (Uncertainly.) I yont know . . . (The OLD MAN carefully pulls her through. He shuts the gate behind her with his foot. He glances round and then touches her breast. She looks round, afraid.) Not here.

OLD MAN. Yo'm a beauty, gal. Let us feel.

YOUNG WOMAN. Got money, hev yo'?

OLD MAN. Wait back a the garden in that bit a orchard.

YOUNG WOMAN (looking toward the house). He . . . ?

OLD MAN. No one yont see down there. I got money. You go sharpish an' keep low. I'll be down by-n'by.

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(The YOUNG WOMAN goes through the gap in the hedge. The OLD MAN picks up his shears and cuts the hedge. SHAKESPEARE comes from the house. He carries a purse.)

OLD MAN (amused). Her run.
SHAKESPEARE. Call her. She'll be out on the road. (The OLD MAN goes slowly through the gate, still carrying the shears. He looks right and left, then calls.)
OLD MAN. Gal. (He comes back through the gate.) Her run. (SHAKESPEARE puts the purse in his pocket. The OLD MAN starts cutting the hedge again. SHAKESPEARE sits on the bench. Silence. The OLD MAN laughs a little to himself, just loud enough to be heard. SHAKESPEARE doesn't react. The OLD MAN steps back and looks at the hedge.) She yont need lookin' at till next spring.

(SHAKESPEARE doesn't react. The OLD MAN goes out through the gap. SHAKESPEARE is alone. He sits on the bench. The paper is beside him. A chapel bell begins to peal. It is very close. SHAKESPEARE doesn't react. An OLD WOMAN comes from the house. She wears an apron.)

OLD WOMAN. Where's hubby? (SHAKESPEARE shrugs. The OLD WOMAN calls.) Father. (To SHAKESPEARE.) His drink's on table if -- (The bell stops.) -- yo' see him. (She calls.) Father. (To SHAKESPEARE.) Mr. Combe's in the house a-talkin t' Judith. Yo' yont ought-a set out here. That's cold afore you feel it this toime a year.

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SHAKESPEARE. It's the last of the sun.
OLD WOMAN. So it may be. (Slight pause.)
Mr. Combe's come arter the land. Mornin', business. If 'twas yonythin' else he'd a come on an evenin'. (SHAKESPEARE doesn't react.) There's plenty a talk! Some say summat, some say summat else. (Slight pause.) P'raps he'll tell yo' what he's up to. (Slight pause.) People kip arksin' me hev I 'eard yonythin'. Yo'll be brought in -- you stand t'lose.
SHAKESPEARE. And your son.
OLD WOMAN. An' a lot a others. What'll yo' tell him?
SHAKESPEARE. Your son told you to question me.
OLD WOMAN. They've hed a meetin'. They thought I ought-a arkst.
SHAKESPEARE. I don't know anything.
OLD WOMAN. What'll yo' do?
SHAKESPEARE. There's plenty of time.
OLD WOMAN. Start buildin' bridges when your feet git wet. If he shut they fields up he'll ruin whole families. They yont got a penny put by. My son say he like a speak t'yo' bout it. I told him t'look in this mornin'.
SHAKESPEARE. Did you.
OLD WOMAN. I thought yo'd want t' hear him out.

(WILLIAM COMBE comes through from the house L.)

SHAKESPEARE. Mornin', Will.
COMBE. Mornin'.
OLD WOMAN. Mornin', Mr. Combe. (SHAKESPEARE nods and the OLD WOMAN goes out R through the gate.)
COMBE. Nice garden. Your hobby, is it?
SHAKESPEARE. No. I weed a bit. I get tired.
I planted the maples.

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OLD WOMAN (off, on the road). Father.

COMBE. Quiet for you after London. You should take an interest in local affairs. We could get you on the town council.

SHAKESPEARE. No.

COMBE. Well, no use if you're not dedicated. You have to find time for it. Pity, though.

OLD WOMAN (off). Father.

COMBE. How's your wife?

SHAKESPEARE. Much the same.

COMBE. Well . . . sensible to sit here -- if you know how to sit. Wears me out, of course. Been listening to gossip?

SHAKESPEARE. I've heard something.

COMBE. The gossip's true for once. There are over four hundred acres of common field out at Welcombe. They're owned by a group of farmers and a crowd of tenants. It's divided up into so many bits and pieces no one knows where they are. We can't farm the way we want -- we all have to do what the bad farmers do.

SHEAKESPEARE. We?

COMBE. Me -- and two other big land owners. We're going to enclose -- stake out new fields the size of all our old pieces put together and shut them up behind hedges and ditches. Then we can farm in our own way. Tenants with long leases will be reallocated new land. Squatters and small tenants on short leases will have to go: we shan't renew. That leaves you, and some others, who own rents on the land.

SHAKESPEARE. The rents. I bought my share years ago out of money I made by writing.

COMBE. All the farmers on the common fields pay you a rent based on their earnings -- so any change affects you. Quite a large part of

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your regular income must come from that rent. A sound investment.

SHAKESPEARE. I wanted security. Is it true that when you enclose you're going over from corn to sheep?

COMBE. Mostly. Sheep prices are lower than corn prices but they still give the best return. Low on labor costs! No ploughing, sowing, harvesting, threshing, carting -- just a few old shepherds who can turn their hand to butchery. Sheep are pure profit.

SHAKESPEARE. But you know I could lose? I've got no labor costs, I just draw my rents.

(The OLD WOMAN comes through the gate. She crosses the garden and goes out L.)

COMBE (factually). Everyone listens to money. (He looks off L a moment and then turns back to SHAKESPEARE.) There's another problem: the town council also own some of the rents. They use their share to feed the town poor -- seven hundred -- not counting gypsies and riff-raff passing through. You see there's a lot of money involved!

SHAKESPEARE. The town will oppose you. A lot of the small holders don't have written leases. They just followed their fathers onto the land -- and their fathers had followed <u>their</u> fathers. If you get rid of them and the short-lease tenants -- there'll be more than seven hundred poor to feed. And if you grow less wheat the price of bread will go up --

COMBE. Then it'll be profitable to grow more wheat and the price will come down. Always take the long view, Will. I selfishly cut down my labor costs and put up prices and the town suffers

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-- but not in the long run. This is the only way men have so far discovered of running the world. Men are donkeys, they need carrots and sticks. All the other ways: they come down to bigger sticks. But there's a difference between us and the beast. We understand the nature of carrots and sticks. That's why we can get rid of the bad farmers who grow starvation in their fields like a crop, and create seven hundred poor in a town of less than two thousand. But -- in the meantime the town council will oppose me. They don't want to feed the new poor while they wait for history to catch up with the facts. They're writing to you for help.

SHAKESPEARE. Who told you --

COMBE. My friends on the council. You're one of the biggest rent holders. You're respectable. They probably think you've got friends in London. You could make out a strong case against me.

SHAKESPEARE. We've come to the river.

COMBE. We needn't build a bridge if there's a ford downstream. Will you reach an agreement with me?

SHAKESPEARE. You'll get increased profits -- you can afford to guarantee me against loss. And the town councillors.

COMBE. I make all the effort, I expect to keep my carrot.

SHAKESPEARE. I invested a lot of money.

COMBE. I'll tell you why I'm here: I'll guarantee you against loss, in return for an understanding.

SHAKESPEARE. Yes?

COMBE. Don't support the town or the tenants. When the council write, ignore them. Be noncommittal or say you think nothing will come of it. Stay in your garden. I'll pay for that.

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SHAKESPEARE. You read too much into it. I'm protecting my own interests. Not supporting you, or fighting the town.

COMBE. That's all I want. It needn't be written into our agreement, it wouldn't read well: but it will be implied. After all, if we sign an agreement it wouldn't pay you to attack me: you get your present rents guaranteed at no extra cost. Free insurance. It pays to sit in a garden.

SHAKESPEARE. You guarantee me the difference between what my rents are now and what they'll be after enclosure, if they fall. How do we agree the figures?

COMBE. O, you can accept my --

SHAKESPEARE (giving COMBE his sheet of paper). I want security. I can't provide for the future again. My father went bankrupt when he was old. Too easygoing.

COMBE (holding the paper). Yes, a nice man, but as you say, too . . . Very well. We'll appoint independent assessors. How many?

SHAKESPEARE. Another thing. I've got over a hundred acres of my own land out there. Are you after that?

COMBE. No, no. We won't touch your private land. This only affects your rents from the common fields.

(The OLD MAN hurries in through the gap in the hedge. He is frightened but defiant, excited and amused. He looks round, backs a few steps toward the hedge and stands there. SHAKESPEARE and COMBE don't notice him. COMBE reads Shakespeare's piece of paper. A moment's silence. The SON comes angrily through the gap in the hedge. He is excited

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and tight-jawed. The SON stares at the OLD MAN before bursting out.)

SON. Beast.
OLD MAN (laughing briefly). Look at him.
SON. Animal. In daylight. Back on a public high road. Any child could put its yead cross the wall. (COMBE looks at them.)
OLD MAN (pointing at the SON). Look at him!
SON. Gray hair. Waggin' your bony ol' arse. Slobberin' like a boy with mud pies.
COMBE. He's got a woman in there.
SON. Hev yo' no shame? God an' man see you in the daylight. Yo'm drag creation down t' the beast. Animal. They ugly ol' legs. Runnin' loike a thief. Ugly.

(JUDITH and the OLD WOMAN come out of the house L and enter the garden.)

SON. Look at him! Where your wife an' child can see yo'.
JUDITH. What is it?
OLD WOMAN. Father, your drink's inside on the table.
OLD MAN. Yont sendin' me indoor. Look how red he go!
COMBE(going to the hedge and calling through). Girl! Come here.
SON. Git her out. Thass her. Runnin' round them trees. Tried a climb the wall. I shut the gate on 'em when I saw what t'was. (He goes to the gap and calls through.) Come out. (He turns to the OLD MAN.) Loike an animal. Ugly. (To the others.) He yont hed the shame t'cover her yead with her skart.
COMBE (calling). You won't get out there. It's locked.

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(Silence. The YOUNG WOMAN comes through the gap in the hedge.)

COMBE. You're not a local girl.
YOUNG WOMAN. On my way t'Bristol, sir.
COMBE. Got work there?
YOUNG WOMAN (nodding). Can I go, sir?
COMBE. No doubt your family's dead and your husband's left you?
YOUNG WOMAN. Not wed, sir. My family's dead, though. Can I go?
COMBE. Who've you got in Bristol -- your sister, uncle?
OLD MAN (laughing). Her auntie. Mr. Combe almost got 'an roight.
COMBE. Dear me, we're in a bad way. Half the country's suddenly bereaved and they're marching round England to stay with relatives who live as far away as possible. The law says you can't leave your parish without a pass. Where's your pass?
YOUNG WOMAN. I yont no beggar woman, sir.
SON. Mr. Combe's on the bench. Yo' hed it now. Yo'll be punished.
SHAKESPEARE (to the SON). Why were you in my orchard? (They all turn to look at SHAKESPEARE.)
SON. I come t'see yo'. Mother say I . . . (The YOUNG WOMAN starts to cry. They all turn back to her.)
YOUNG WOMAN. My aunt's waitin' in Bristol. My family's dead.
JUDITH. Where?
YOUNG WOMAN. Coventry.
JUDITH. Could you point out their graves?
YOUNG WOMAN. They'm buried in poor ground. Nothin' t'show.

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COMBE. We have her sort in front of us every week, Judith. Do anything for money -- though they'd rather do nothing. Lie when they learn to speak. First time they say father it's a lie. (He laughs shortly.) The law says you're to be whipped here in the shopping place till the blood runs and then sent back to your parish in Coventry, was it?

YOUNG WOMAN. Yont whip us, sir? I were whip afore an' that hurt my yead sorely. I couldn't go with people arter. I walked okkard an' fell down in the road. I were a gal then an' that's only better now.

COMBE. If there's something wrong with your head it'll do it good. Doctors whip mad people. I'd like to follow my own inclinations and let you off but I have to protect the public. You're a healthy girl, sleeping rough hardens your skin. You'll be all right. If you lead your sort of life you must learn to pay for it. (To the SON.) Take her to the lock-up. (The SON starts to take the YOUNG WOMAN out R.)

YOUNG WOMAN (earnestly, not crying). Yo' yont whip us, sir. That destroy my yead. The Constable's wife long a 'cester say that's a shame t'whip me. (The SON takes her out through the gate. She is heard off on the road.) I fall over the road, sir. Yont whip us.

COMBE. Tch, locusts or the blight. (To SHAKESPEARE.) I'll show this paper to my lawyers and be in touch. Good-bye. (COMBE goes out L. JUDITH goes with him.)

OLD MAN. He git cross!

OLD WOMAN. Father, go in an' hev your drink. (The OLD MAN goes into the house.) I'm sorry my boy shouted. Young people yont got no patience -- worse'n us. I hope he yont upsit

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his father.

SHAKESPEARE. They're going to enclose.

OLD WOMAN. What'll you do?

SHAKESPEARE. Wait and see.

OLD WOMAN. Yo' give him a sheet a piper.

SHAKESPEARE. Nothing's decided. Has this shouting woken my wife? See if she's all right. (The OLD WOMAN goes out L. SHAKESPEARE sits on the bench. He stares in front of him for a moment.)

TWO

SCENE: Garden. Six months later.)

AT RISE OF CURTAIN: The OLD WOMAN and JUDITH are sitting alone on the bench.)

JUDITH. Has your marriage been happy?

OLD WOMAN. 'Twas. We had seven good year first off. Then the press men come t' church one Sunday mornin' an' hid back a the tombstones. When the men come from the lord's supper out they jump an' tak em over sea t'fight. I still think a them times on an'off. Time 'fore the flood.

JUDITH. Seven years out of a life. Most people don't have that.

OLD WOMAN. He were gone three year. Then two men bot him hwome. He'd bin hit top the yead with an axe. Some man were killin' a man lay on the ground front on him an' when he swung his axe back he hit father top the

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