

Excerpts from *The Shakespeare Stealer*

Name: _____

Directions:

Read the selections below, from *The Shakespeare Stealer* by Gary Blackwood. For each selection, look for the author's use of puns and word play. Underline any examples you find and write a brief explanation for each.

FIRST SCENE

(Horse whinnies O.S. Right. Falconer reacts, abruptly puts away the flask and loosens his rapier in its sheath, looking about and listening intently. THREE THIEVES enter at Left, led by a BURLY MAN armed with a wheel-lock pistol. His three fellows carry swords or daggers.)

BURLY MAN: Don't move, if you value your life.

FALCONER: *(unexpectedly amiable)* God rest you, gentlemen.

BURLY MAN: God is it? Don't tell me you're a parson?

FALCONER: No, no. Far from it.

BURLY MAN: Good. I don't like doing business with parsons. They're too parsimonious. *(Laughs)* All right, let's have it, then.

FALCONER: Have what?

BURLY MAN: *(Laughs again)* Have what, 'a says! Why, have a pot of ale wi' us, of course. *(More soberly)* Come now, enough pleasantries. Let's have your purse, man.

FALCONER: *(Pulls out his hefty purse. Still amiable.)* Ah. Forgive me for not taking your meaning.

BURLY MAN: Oh, aye, an you forgive me for taking your purse.

(Falconer steps to the man, who holds out a hand for the purse. Instead of handing it over, Falconer swings it swiftly upward, catching the burly man alongside the head. The man cries out, crumbles to the ground; his pistol goes off wildly. The other thieves spring forward. Falconer draws his rapier, parries an ineffectual blow, kicks the man in the groin. A second blow he deflects with his cloak, bashes the man in the face with the hilt of his rapier. Widge picks up a rock, but has no chance to use it. Falconer grasps the third man's blade in his cloak-wrapped hand, yanks it away, and slices the man's ribs with his own sword. With the thieves lying about groaning, Falconer lifts his purse with the point of his sword, flips it in the air, catches it, then shakes a single coin from it and throws it at the burly man's feet.)

FALCONER: If this is a toll road, you might simply have tolled me.

BURLY MAN: *(Laughs, then groans in pain)* Would that you had been a parson after all.

SECOND SCENE

(Takes place after fencing practice. Widge and Julian have been practice partners and Widge has been pretending to have been hurt by Julian.)

JULIAN: Well. Perhaps you're not such a bad sort after all, for a country wight.

WIDGE: Is that the London way of giving a compliment?

JULIAN: I suppose it is.

WIDGE: I' that case, I suppose you're not such a bad sort either-for a city wight.

JULIAN: Touch. Your point. So, how do you come to be in London?

WIDGE: That's something of a long tale.

JULIAN: Well, bob it for me.

THIRD SCENE:

(Widge has just made his first stage appearance and comes off-stage to senior company members.)

ARMIN: Well, you survived your baptism of fire. How did it feel to be onstage for the first time?

WIDGE: I hardly ken. It was like...like being in a dream. Did I say me lines right?

SANDER: Even the Pedringano.

POPE: I remember well my first faltering steps upon the boards.

ARMIN: I had no idea they had boards so long ago.

POPE: Oh, we knew how to make boards well enough. It wasn't until your time that we learned how to make the *audience* bored.

Excerpted from *The Shakespeare Stealer*, by Gary Blackwood