

## Scene Two

*(The Rose Theatre.)*

*[MUSIC NO. 2: "THE HENCHMEN"]*

*(LAMBERT and FREES have HENSLOWE over hot coals as FENNYMAN looks on.)*

HENSLOWE. Arrrrgghhh!!!!

FENNYMAN. You mongrel! Why do you howl when it is I who am bitten? What am I, Mister Lambert?

LAMBERT. Bitten, Mister Fennyman.

FENNYMAN. How badly, Mister Frees?

FREES. Twelve pounds, one shilling, and fourpence, Mister Fennyman, plus interest.

HENSLOWE. I can pay you!

FENNYMAN. When? Mister Henslowe?

HENSLOWE. Two weeks. Three at the most. Aaagh. For pity's sake.

FENNYMAN. Drop him.

HENSLOWE. Aaaaggh!

FENNYMAN. Where will you get...

FREES. Sixteen pounds, five shillings, and ninepence...

HENSLOWE. I have a wonderful new play!

FENNYMAN. A play?

HENSLOWE. A play, Mister Fennyman.

FENNYMAN. Let him have it.

HENSLOWE. Aaaaggh! It's a comedy.

FENNYMAN. Cut off his nose.

HENSLOWE. Aaaaggh! A new comedy.

FENNYMAN. And his ear.

HENSLOWE. By Will Shakespeare.

FENNYMAN. Who?

HENSLOWE. His *Two Gentlemen of Verona* is to be played for the Queen at Whitehall today, acted by Richard Burbage and the Chamberlain's Men.

FENNYMAN. Shakespeare? Never heard of him.

HENSLOWE. I think he has potential. We will be partners, Mister Fennyman.

FENNYMAN. Partners?

HENSLOWE. The play's a crowd tickler – mistaken identities, a shipwreck, a pirate king, a bit with a dog, and love triumphant.

FREES. Didn't you see that one, Lambert?

LAMBERT. Yeah, and I didn't like it.

HENSLOWE. Aaaaggh! But this time it is by Shakespeare.

FENNYMAN. What's it called?

HENSLOWE. *Romeo and Ethel the Pirate's Daughter*.

FENNYMAN. Good title. A play takes time. Find actors... rehearsals, let's say open in three weeks. That's – what – five hundred groundlings at tuppence each, in addition four hundred backsides at three pence – a penny extra for a cushion, call it two hundred cushions, say two performances for safety. How much is that, Mister Frees?

FREES. Twenty pounds to the penny.

FENNYMAN. Correct!

HENSLOWE. But I have to pay the actors and the author.

FENNYMAN. A share of the profits.

HENSLOWE. There's never any profits.

FENNYMAN. Of course not!

HENSLOWE. Mister Fennyman, I think you may have hit on something.

FENNYMAN. Sign here.

HENSLOWE. It's blank.

FENNYMAN. I know.