*(Ben Jonson flings open the door in front of John.)*

BEN. What the hell are you doing at my door?

JOHN. Ben. It's John. John Heminges.

BEN. I can see that, John Heminges, what the hell are you doing at

my door?

JOHN. Well, I'm here for Will. Shakespeare. He needs you. *(Ben stares at him).*

BEN. You know he’d deck you for saying that. From the grave. Come in.

BEN. And what does William Shakespeare require that God does

not provide in Heaven, and if he is not in Heaven then tell him to

wait until I get to Hell to bother me.

JOHN. We don’t want to bother you, Ben, but we do come to ask

you something very important.

BEN. Then hurry up and ask.

JOHN. We're in a pickle publishing Will's plays and we wondered—well, we want you to ... preface the book.

BEN. Preface. The book?

JOHN. If you could manage only a few lines

BEN. Hmm.

JOHN. (Some reverse psychology.) Or. Yes. Perhaps we do a greater

disservice giving his rival the first word in his life's work-

BEN. I'll do it.

JOHN. No, you're right

BEN. I'll do it.

JOHN. It's a stupid idea-

BEN. I said I'll do it. Something short. Pedestrian. Something his

audience could understand. Give me a week.

JOHN. Thank you, Ben. Thank you so much.

BEN. (*A* *sudden* *soft* *side*.) Oh. John. I heard about your wife. Terrible

thing that. I liked her very much.

JOHN. l know.

BEN. I don't like many people.

JOHN. I know.

BEN. Bloody Will Bloody Shakespeare.

JOHN. Thank you, Ben. You're a good man.

BEN. Just leave, I've got beer to do, get out.

JOHN. I think you mean work.

BEN. I know what I mean, get out.