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Opening extract from  
**The Boy and the Globe**

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# THE Cast

- TOBY CUFFE . . . . . an orphan boy
- JACK FILCHER . . . . . a young thief
- WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE . . . . . a writer of plays
- MOLL CUT-PURSE . . . . . a trainer of young thieves
- JOHN HEMINGES  
HENRY CONDELL  
AUGUSTINE PHILLIPS  
RICHARD BURBAGE  
ROBERT ARMIN } . . . play-house people and  
actors from The Globe
- NED ALLEYN . . . . . an owner of a rival  
play-house
- SIR EDMUND TILNEY . . . . . Master of the Revels to  
King James
- KING JAMES . . . . . a monarch
- SARAH . . . . . a girl who Toby meets
- A TAVERN KEEPER, VARIOUS ROUGH BOYS, GENTLEMEN,  
PLAY-HOUSE AUDIENCES, OTHER RESIDENTS OF LONDON

THE  
Place

London

THE  
Time

The years 1611 and 1623



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ACT I

The  
Story



## SCENE ONE

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### Queen of the Pick-Pockets

The inn stood on the corner of a narrow street just off Cheapside, the great road that led from St Paul's and into the heart of London. The sign over the door said The Devil's Tavern. This was the place Toby was looking for. He took a deep breath and went inside.

Beyond the door was a large, dark room full of people drinking and shouting and laughing raucously. Toby had been in taverns





before, so he knew what they were like, but this one seemed especially rough. He looked around at the people sitting at the tables, and the few who were standing, but none of them seemed to be the person Toby was after. He went up to the bar. The tavern keeper had a shiny bald head, a purple nose and a sagging


belly that arrived quite some time before the rest of him. He peered down at Toby.

“Begging your leave, sir,” Toby said.

“Where can I find ... you-know-who?”

“Another lamb for the slaughter, eh?” the tavern keeper snorted. “She’s in the back room with her band of rogues.” He nodded to a door in the corner.





Toby thanked him, opened the door he had indicated, and went into an even darker room. It was lit by a couple of smoky lanterns and Toby had to peer through the thick air to see who else was there. There were a dozen or so tough-looking boys leaning against the walls, but none took any notice of Toby, so he stood beside them. A small, skinny boy was standing alone in the middle of the room, and in front of him a figure sat on a big chair like a throne. Deep shadow covered the figure's face – then suddenly a powerful voice came out of the darkness.

“*Books?* What am I supposed to do with a few blasted *books*, you dolt?”

“Sorry, Moll!” the boy squeaked, clearly

terrified. “I just don’t know what I was thinking, really I don’t. I saw ’em lying there and I grabbed ’em and ran!”

The person sitting in the chair stood up into the light, and Toby saw it was a woman. She was tall and broad-shouldered and she wore a man’s leather jerkin over a woman’s raggedy gown. She had a tangle of black hair like the nest of an incredibly messy bird, and a face that looked as if it could turn you to stone. So this was Moll Cut-Purse, the Queen of London’s thieves and pick-pockets.

“Don’t do it again,” Moll snarled at the boy. She grabbed a book from a table beside her chair and flicked through it. Then she threw it down again. “When I send you out to

do some thieving it's gold and silver I want, or at least something I can sell. Why, I'll wager the printers themselves couldn't even sell this lot. Not that we know what any of them are about, do we? Seeing as ... *NONE OF US CAN READ!*"

She shouted the last few words, and the boy winced as if she had struck him. The rest of Moll's boys laughed and jeered and called him nasty names. Toby had heard a lot of swearing on the streets of London, but some of their curses were new to him.

"Er ... perhaps I could help?" he said, stepping forward. "I can read."

"Is that right?" Moll said, glaring at him. "And who might you be?"