

From the mind and heart of Professor Reginald Lloyd, Guy
Fawkes Chairs of English Literature, Fenwick University, 1900.

Dear reader,

I have aptly chosen to address this note to the reader himself; that is, the one who is (un?)fortunate enough to discover this letter contained within this box of papers. You, my dear reader, are left with a choice to act or not act, or, as they are so fond of saying these days, since you have now been presented with this choice, then your decision to act or not act is the same just as to not choose is to make a choice. Thus do you really have a choice? Or has Fortuna made known her will? Should you choose to inquire more into this measly archival box, a great responsibility will rest heavily on your shoulders: the type of responsibility which lasts longer than a lifetime. What sits in peace behind this note is fragments from the play *The History of Cardenio* by playwright William Shakespeare, the finest wordsmith the English language has ever had the privilege of meeting (Oh and I should probably mention that it was co-authored by the largely overlooked John Fletcher). Though the play was said to be lost (Oh! I can't help but laugh when people, especially "scholars" opt to describe something as "lost" rather than "yet to be found") this was not really the case. Yes, The King's Men only performed the play once. However, this was not a mere accident. At the behest of William himself (and Fletcher), the King's Men hid the play away with the intention of keeping their sacrosanct work a secret. After all, what

is sacred is secret and what is secret is sacred. Knowledge of the play was limited to a small group of men who became known as the Keepers of Secrets. The secret was well kept until the unspeakable crime of Lewis Theobald. As an unspeakable crime, I shall of course begin to expound and speak of it with great depth and detail. Theobald, in his youth, had wiggled his way into becoming one of the Keeper of Secrets. As you may know, dear reader, Theobald was one of the most important editors of the Bard's works during the 18th century, and much of the academic world outside the bailiwick of Fenwick University regards Theobald as a pivotal player in the continuing preservation of Shakespeare's writings. Alas, I digress. In the pursuit of fame and vainglory, Theobald produced new manuscripts for Cardenio, boasting of the hidden play to anyone of whom he wanted to garner respect from. It was an horrifying and tragic betrayal of the oath he swore as a Keeper of Secrets. Luckily for us, however, Theobald was such an illiterate rat that the manuscript he produced bore little resemblance to the actual play Cardenio. In due time, however, the other Keepers of Secrets put an end to Theobald's antics and since that time, once a year the Keepers of Secrets sing a song in thanksgiving for the absolute ineptitude, incompetence, and incompleteness of Lewis Theobald; it has quite a merry tune. For several generations the Keepers of Secrets did exactly as the Bard (and Fletcher) intended. And so now we come to me. When I was a young student at Oxford I happened to befriend an old professor who would go on to induct me as a Keeper of Secrets. How we met and other

details must wait for another letter as I hardly have the ink to finish this one! When I met him he was one of two Keepers of Secrets. In those times, the group had difficulty finding men who they deemed capable of carrying out the duty of a Keeper of Secrets, thus, the size of the group had declined greatly. Today, I am the last of the Keepers of Secrets. And, as such, I did what was requested by Shakespeare (and Fletcher), a request which survives in the memory of our oral tradition: "should a day come where the Keepers of Secrets number one, perform the play in a place that has earned its grace, and for sometime the Keeper of Secrets shall be numbered as none, until fortuna selects anew from those who would this play happen upon." Thus, I performed the play at Fenwick University on the night of April 22/23 1900 in the year of our Lord. After this performance I did well to rehide the play until fortuna decides to unearth it again. You, my dear reader, by virtue of having found this letter, now carry on the responsibility of watching over our beloved Cardenio. I trust you will do with these papers as you know best. It is not me you have to fear but the Bard (and Fletcher).

in Faith and Understanding,
Professor Reginald Llyod, The Guy Fawkes Chair of English
Literature, written at Fenwick University on the Feast of St.
George 1900.