

Side 2 START >>>

Age: 30s

011 TOPCLIFFE

Never, Your Majesty. My only desire is to serve... As you see fit.

A SHARP KNOCK ON THE DOOR.

012 QUEEN ELIZABETH

(voice steady)

Enter.

Walsingham and Burghley enter hurriedly.

013 LORD BURGHLEY

(taking in the scene)

Pardon the - interruption, Your Majesty.

014 WALSINGHAM

It's the Duke of Norfolk, Your Majesty. He has been conspiring with Mary, Queen of Scots.

015 QUEEN ELIZABETH

What proof do you have?

016 WALSINGHAM

Your Majesty?

017 QUEEN ELIZABETH

You claim mine own blood conspires against me for my death. What proof do you have for these claims?

WALSINGHAM HESITATES, THEN PULLS A CLOTH FROM HIS POCKET. HE LAYS A CLOTH ON THE TABLE.

018 WALSINGHAM

This embroidered handkerchief was found on the Duke's person.

019 QUEEN ELIZABETH

(reading)

Destroy Sterile Vine.

She pauses.

020 LORD BURGHLEY

He claimed it was a message of hope. About pruning what no longer bears fruit.

THE QUEEN STANDS AND TAKES A FEW STEPS.

021 QUEEN ELIZABETH

The vine is a holy thing. In scripture, the vine is Christ. The church. The nation.

(turning slowly)

So what, then, is a sterile vine?

A pause.

022 LORD BURGHLEY

(quietly, timidly)

Your enemies say you, Your Majesty.

023 TOPCLIFFE

Reprehensible!

024 WALSINGHAM

It is a phrase gaining favor among the Recusants. They see your reign as fruitless, barren of divine sanction. They mean to cut you down. Replace you with one more *fertile* for their cause.

025 QUEEN ELIZABETH

More obedient to Rome, you mean.

026 WALSINGHAM

Yes.

An eerie silence washes over the room.

027 QUEEN ELIZABETH

There's more?

028 LORD BURGHLEY

They also use this phrase to sway Protestant minds and to view your womb as sterile...

029 QUEEN ELIZABETH

I am not barren!

030 LORD BURGHLEY

Of course, not, Your Majesty.

031 WALSINGHAM

It is a traitorous claim!

THE SILENCE LINGERS AGAIN AS THE FIRE CRACKLES.

032 QUEEN ELIZABETH

Destroy sterile vine?

(MORE)

QUEEN ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

(venomous)

The fools who think it shall feel
every *prick* of this vine's thorns.

A pause.

033 QUEEN ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

As for my cousin, the Duke of
Norfolk...

034 LORD BURGHLEY

Yes, Your Majesty?

035 QUEEN ELIZABETH

Imprison him! But only after
Topcliffe teaches him a lesson in
the Tower.

036 TOPCLIFFE

With *pleasure*, Your Majesty.

SHE PACES TOWARD HER DESK.

037 WALSINGHAM

Forgive me, Your Majesty. But it is
not enough to imprison him.

038 QUEEN ELIZABETH

Excuse me?

039 WALSINGHAM

We cannot show *mercy* for treason.

040 QUEEN ELIZABETH

He is my cousin, Walsingham.

041 WALSINGHAM

He is a *traitor*, Your Majesty. If
he is allowed to live, what does
that say to your enemies?

042 QUEEN ELIZABETH

I can't just-

<<< END

043 WALSINGHAM

Destroy Sterile Vine. Destroy you?
We must find every man who has
uttered this phrase... Every
woman's hand that has stitched
it... Let them learn what it is to
threaten the crown.

SUSPENSEFUL MUSIC TRANSITIONS US TO...