

5

INT. HAMPTON COURT PALACE - THE QUEEN'S STUDY - DAY

A FIRE CRACKLES. A KNOCK SOUNDS AT THE DOOR.

005 QUEEN ELIZABETH

Enter.

TOPCLIFFE OPENS THE DOOR AND ENTERS.

006 TOPCLIFFE

Good evening, Your Majesty.
(realizing they're alone)
What an honor... To have even a
moment of your undivided attention.

THE QUEEN RISES AND STEPS TOWARD TOPCLIFFE.

007 QUEEN ELIZABETH

I am grateful for your loyalty in
these years after my
"excommunication." I know people
call me cruel. Violent. But I also
hear what the Gentry say of you in
court, Master Topcliffe. Vicious.
Merciless.

(softly)

Tell me... Do you take pleasure in
finding and torturing the
Recusants?

008 TOPCLIFFE

Pleasure?...that does not feel
adequate.

(Assured, sinister)

I *relish* the hunt. I *bask* in the
screams of England's traitors. A
man reveals the truest things when
he's just shy of breaking. And I
hear those truths at their birth.

A SHORT PAUSE AS THE FIRE CRACKLES.

009 TOPCLIFFE (CONT'D)

I take much pleasure in being the
Queen's Servant. I confess, I
rather enjoy being excellent at the
things my Queen needs.

010 QUEEN ELIZABETH

(coolly)

You tread dangerously close to
arrogance, Topcliffe. I advise you
not to mistake favour for license.

Side 1
START >>>

011 TOPCLIFFE

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

<<< END

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.