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SF PERUSALS

VIVAT!
VIVAT REGINA!

A Play

by

ROBERT BOLT

SAMUEL  FRENCH

LONDON

NEW YORK TORONTO SYDNEY HOLLYWOOD

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VIVAT! VIVAT REGINA!

First presented at the Chichester Festival Theatre on 20th May 1970, and afterwards at the Piccadilly Theatre, London, on 8th October 1970, with the following cast of characters:

Mary Queen of Scots	Sarah Miles
Claud Nau	David Bird
William Cecil	Richard Pearson
Elizabeth I of England	Eileen Atkins
Robert Dudley	Norman Eshley
John Knox	Leonard Maguire
Bagpiper	Willie Cochrane
David Rizzio	Matthew Guinness
Lord Morton	Archie Duncan
Lord Bothwell	David McKail
Lord Bishop of Durham	Brian Hawksley
A Cleric	Kenneth Caswell
Sir Francis Walsingham	Edgar Wreford
De Quadra	Edward Atienza
Davison	Eilian Wyn
Henry Stuart, Lord Darnley	Cavan Kendall
Lord Mor	Brian Hawksley
Ruthven	Glyn Grain
Lindsey	Alexander John
A Doctor	Ken Grant
Tala	Malcolm Rogers
Ormiston	Jonathan Mallard
A Prisoner	Malcolm Rogers
Scots Archbishop	Maurice Jones
Philip, King of Spain	Alastair Meldrum
The Pope	Kenneth Caswell
Jailers	Adrian Reynolds
	Ken Grant
Brewer	Adrian Reynolds
Courtiers, Lairds, Clerks,	Glyn Grain
Servants, etc.	Ken Grant
	Maurice Jones
	Alastair Meldrum
	Adrian Reynolds
Court Ladies	Isabel Metliss
	Angela Easton

The play directed by Peter Dews
Setting by Carl Toms

The action of the play takes place in France, England and Scotland

Period - sixteenth century

A NOTE TO DESIGNER

I have tried to assume enough for you to work upon yet not so much as to prevent your making a substantial contribution to the style of production.

You will see that the stage serves at one moment for the Court of England and at the next for the Court of Scotland. I hope the properties will be solid and pleasurable in themselves to look at, but that the lighting, not the properties, will create the changes of time and place and mood. I hope the costumes will convey the extravagances and extremes of the period, yet not distract the audience nor tie up the actors.

I have assumed: One, a flat-topped pyramid or flight of shallow steps, supporting a screen or curtain in the First Act and the throne in the Second Act. Two, a table with stools. Three, a "pulpit", though this could be a mere lectern. Four, a hanging or revolving cloth of State. My intention is to maintain a smoothly continuous narrative to which changes of time and place will seem incidental.

PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS

(in order of their appearance)

Ladies: Pretty, flighty, privileged, young.

Nau: An elderly bachelor; gentle, learned, anxious, utterly upright, deeply affectionate.

Mary: Overbred, refined and passionate; sympathetic, beautiful, intelligent and brave. But sensual and subjective. Born a Queen, deferred to from the cradle, it is a tribute to her nature that she is not simply spoiled. But she mistakes her public office for a private attribute.

Cecil: A top flight Civil Servant, reasonable, courteous, ruthless.

Elizabeth: Personable, wilful, highly-strung. But schooled to clear sight and tuned to self-discipline by a dangerous and lonely childhood. Commencing her reign as a natural perhaps just faintly neurotic young woman, her strength of character is such that she meets the unnatural demands of Queenship with increasing brilliance, in an increasing rage of undisclosed resentment.

Dudley: A tall, hard, virile animal; unintellectual but nobody's fool.

Knox: A pedant and a demagogue, a nasty combination. But palpably, frighteningly sincere.

Morton: Renaissance noble and tribal Chief; seasoned and at ease in every kind of villainy.

Rizzio: A likeable hedonist, affectionate and sceptical; but a lightweight; precarious.

Bothwell: Shrewd, coarse-natured, irresponsible; but uncomplaining as unpitying, genuinely a law unto himself; a dangerous vortex to dependent natures.

Bishop: A conscientious career clergyman, a bit selfish, a bit ignoble; but he knows that.

Walsingham: A Puritan and humourless on principle, but dangerously intelligent; a selfless intriguer, a dedicated wolf.

De Quadra: Walsingham's opposite, suave in manner; equally dedicated, equally dangerous.

Darnley: A tall, athletic, good-looking aristocrat; too young, too merely pleasant to withstand the heavy personal and public pressures bearing on him.

Ormiston: A ragged Border ruffian. Middle-aged, his moral sense quite atrophied.

Davison: A slightly built youth of good family. Too generous by nature for the trade of politics.

Prisoner: A scholar priest worn thin by the life of a secret agent.

Scots Lairds, Servants, Clerks

VIVAT! VIVAT REGINA!

ACT I

Exterior. Dappled sunlight on leaves and fruit
Nau stands looking up at them. Everything still

Voice (*off*) Ho there—The Queen!

Fanfare. Mary enters swiftly followed by two Ladies. She comes to a halt and looks at Nau. He goes down on one knee

Nau Your Grace.

Mary stares at him a space

Mary (*softly; shocked and pitying*) Oh . . .

Nau smiles

Nau Your Grace?
Mary You are grown quite white, Claud.

Nau smiles again at the note of reproach, rubs his white hair, and rises

Nau (*ruefully*) The winters in Scotland are frosty.

Mary's faint smile vanishes. She crosses away from him

Mary Yes . . . Upon what care of State I wonder has my mother sent you back to France. I'm sure it is some care of State. No care for me.
Nau (*reproving*) Mignon; before all else I am to tell you that your mother loves you well.
Mary My mother does not know me.
Nau That is her sorrow, too. The ruling of your Scottish kingdom in your name—and nothing else—has kept your mother from you. And Mignon, that is love and not the lack of it.
Mary A kind of love.
Nau The hardest kind.
Mary Aye hard it is. And granite too is hard. But I have yet to hear it is a good material to make a cradle of. I tell you, Claud, no care of State shall keep me from my child . . . (*Disturbed, she controls her feelings and sits. Formal*) Come, let me know your charges.
Nau Mignon, your mother wonders whether presently in probability you may yourself expect a child.

Mary looks at him

Mary (*softly*) By Heaven I wonder she should wonder it. By Christ—I wonder you should ask!
Nau (*appalled*) Mignon . . .
Mary Leave us, ladies.

The Ladies curtsy and exit quickly

Nau Mignon . . .
Mary I was your "mignon" when I was your pupil, sir!
Nau (*bewildered*) Your Grace, I meant no disrespect . . .
Mary What did you mean—affection?
Nau Assuredly, Your Grace.
Mary I do not understand you, Claud. (*She leaves him*) Have you not waited on my husband?
Nau But now, Your Grace.
Mary Did you not see his face? They sometimes draw the curtains, Claud, to spare his visitors his face.
Nau I saw, Your Grace.
Mary And having seen his face—and having seen the suppurating sores that batten on his poor young mouth—and having seen his ancient eyes —sir, do you ask . . . ?—do you of all men dare to ask if presently in probability I may expect a child?

Nau stares at her a second. Understands her misconception

Nau O-o-oh . . . (*He kneels*) Pardon.
Mary *No!* (*But seeing his pathetic kneeling figure*) Oh, Claud, I was a little girl, and you were all the father and the mother that I had; you taught me how to read and write; and when I got my lessons well—good God, you sat me on your knee and said I was your best of little girls! . . . And when I got my lessons ill my sharpest punishment was your displeasure! And you stood by and said no word and let them marry me to syphilis! No, no—you shall not have my pardon now.
Nau My word carried no weight, Your Grace. Beseech Your Grace believe I spoke.

Mary looks at him dubiously

Mary (*suspiciously*) You spoke no word to me.
Nau They said it would be treason and the axe if I should speak that word, to you. And I was too afraid to do my duty. Pardon.
Mary (*after a pause, gently*) Pardon? For what?
Nau Cowardice.

Mary crosses, and raises him

Mary I'm glad that it was cowardice. Connivance I could not have pardoned.
Nau And am I pardoned now?
Mary Right gladly. (*She becomes almost shy*) I wept in puddles when you went away to Scotland, Claud.

Nau I wept a little, too.
Mary Truly?
Nau I wept with due decorum but, oh yes, I wept.
Mary (*smiling*) "With due decorum." Oh, welcome back. . . . It was my mother offered you the axe if you should tell me, was it not?
Nau It was.
Mary For love of me?
Nau She made the match for love of you. Your husband is the King of France. You are the Queen of Scots. And France and Scotland joined might get your English kingdom, too.
Mary Would you, for fifty Englands, kiss my husband on the mouth?

Nau cannot meet her eyes. She moves away, Nau looking after her

Nau Can they not cure him, madam?
Mary If prayer and care can cure him, I will do it. I do not think the doctors can.
Nau God bless Your Grace.
Mary Aye, bless me, Claud. I also pray for him to die.
Nau Mignon!
Mary Yes. And for myself to have a husband I might love.
Nau Nay now, you must love the one you have.
Mary I am forbid to touch him, Claud.
Nau There is a love that needs no touching.
Mary With such a love as that I love him. But what kind of "love" is that?
Nau The royal kind. The King of Heaven loves us all with such a love as that.
Mary I know it, sir. (*She crosses herself*) And holy nuns return his love; but then they are betrothed to Christ. My husband was betrothed to death upon the day that he was born. And I have no such high vocation as a nun.
Nau (*sternly*) You ought to have; you have high office.
Mary I know that, too, sir. (*Leaving him*) Right well I know. (*She is abstracted*) What is your second charge?
Nau Nay, let us finish with the first. (*Severely*) Mignon, do you mean to take a lover?
Mary . . . I mean to hear your second charge.
Nau The treaty which your mother has negotiated with the English.
Mary (*indifferently, her thoughts elsewhere*) Well?
Nau The English have desired another term.
Mary Oh?
Nau Your Grace shows here—(*indicating the cloth of state*)—the lion of Scotland and the English leopard.

She begins to pay attention

Mary Yes?
Nau The English now desire you to take down the leopard and show the lion only.

Mary No.
Nau Your Grace, it is the express desire of the English Queen.
Mary Of whom?
Nau Your Grace, she is effectively the Queen.
Mary Elizabeth fitz Tudor is a bastard and a heretic and cannot be a queen.
Nau She sits on a throne.
Mary A dog can do that. No, I will not sign this treaty, Claud.
Nau Then the English army will remain in Scotland, where it lives upon the people barbarously.
Mary You are clever, Claud.
Nau Your Grace, I hope, is pitiful.
Mary Let her be pitiful—it is her army!
Nau They are your people.
Mary (*with a shrug*) Well, I will sign it. And she is queen indeed.
Nau In this you show more queen than she.
Mary Aye, anything that makes me less makes me more queen, Claud, does it not?
Nau There is much truth in that.
Mary There is no truth at all in that. And I am sick of hearing that. Diminish me, the Queen's diminished. Starve me, and the Queen will fail. If I am sickly, she is pale. I am the Queen and more the Queen the *more* I am myself!

It is a credo, passionate. Nau looks at her thoughtfully

Nau So thinks Elizabeth.
Mary (*with sour indifference*) Indeed.
Nau Indeed. She too mistakes her office for herself. And thinks that her whole duty is to do as she desires.
Mary She has not had the advantage of your ceaseless moralizing, Claud.
Nau Perhaps that's it. For she will have what she desires and it will fetch her off the throne.
Mary (*startled*) What . . . ? Why, what does she desire?
Nau A husband she might love.
Mary What husband?
Nau Her lover.
Mary (*incredulously*) Robert Dudley?
Nau She loves him.
Mary But he's a commoner.
Nau She loves him for himself, perhaps.
Mary He has a wife.
Nau He does not love his wife.
Mary So?
Nau (*suddenly stern, heavy with distaste*) So his wife must die.
Mary . . . How, die?
Nau Violently.
Mary Are they mad?
Nau They see no duty but their duty to themselves. And that is mad.

Mary Oh, let them do it!—let them do it!
Nau Can you rejoice at murder?
Mary Nay, Claud, you said yourself this thing will fetch her off the throne.
Nau The Queen then must rejoice. I had thought *yourself* more natural.
Mary You are my teacher still. . . . But is it true?
Nau Your mother thinks it true.
Mary I'll warrant she rejoices at it. (*Then, seeing something in his face*) What is it, Claud?
Nau Your mother does not much rejoice at anything, Your Grace.
Mary Why?
Nau Your Grace, she is dying.
Mary Oh. (*She moves, checks, then continues sharply*) You should have told me this at first.
Nau I was instructed to retain it till the last.
Mary Why?
Nau Your royal mother charged me thus: she said, "Our daughter must think first upon these high affairs of state, not discomposed by any grief she may be pleased to feel, upon our dying."

She stares at him

Mary (*softly*) She said that?
Nau Your Grace.
Mary (*almost whispering*) Dying, she said *that?*
Nau Your Grace.
Mary Oh, Claud—I would to God that I had known her! (*Her face crumples, streaming with silent tears she raises and lets fall her arms in a gesture of utter helplessness, and goes, blindly*)

Mary exits

Nau looks after her, then collects himself, moves quickly and calls formally

Nau Ho there—the Queen!

There is a fanfare, as Nau exits

The LIGHTS *change to a cold interior as the leaves and flowers move out* **1**

Servants enter and place in position a table and throne. Cecil enters

Cecil Ho there—the Queen!

There is a fanfare and Elizabeth makes a royal entrance. The Servants bow and exit as Elizabeth sits

Your Grace, even a sovereign cannot do what is impossible.
Elizabeth For me to marry Robert Dudley is not impossible.

Cecil For Your Grace to marry him and remain Queen of England is impossible. (*With gentle insistence*) He must to prison.
Elizabeth We do not know yet that he did it!
Cecil It would appear that he did it. That being so it must be made apparent that Your Grace did not. Your Grace must think how such a marriage would be taken in France and Spain, as well as here at home.
Elizabeth Must I marry to please France and Spain?
Cecil Your Grace, this marriage would delight them. When Mary Stuart heard of it she cried out: "Let them do it!"
Elizabeth She said that?
Cecil That and more, Your Grace.
Elizabeth What more?
Cecil Such stuff as I cannot repeat to Your Grace.
Elizabeth She is free in her ways, that Mary.
Cecil She can afford to be, Your Grace. She is Queen of France, and France is rich. She is Queen of Scots, and Scotland is the rear gate to England. The Catholic half of England thinks that she is Queen of England, too—and she cried out: "Let them do it!"
Elizabeth Well; I would not please Mary by my marriage. Nor will I not marry to displease her! I will marry as my heart and conscience say.
Cecil Conscience . . . ! In Spain they are saying openly: "What kind of a State Church is this, where the Head of the State, the Head of the Church will not only let a man murder his wife—but marry him for 't?" Your Grace, he must to prison.
Elizabeth But what if he is innocent?
Cecil He must to prison pending the enquiry which will find him innocent.
Elizabeth Call him.

Cecil moves to go

William.

Cecil stops

What if he is guilty?
Cecil In that case, too, he must to prison pending the enquiry, which will find him innocent. In neither case can Your Grace marry him.
Elizabeth Call him.
Cecil Be wise, Your Grace.
Elizabeth As wise as I can.

Cecil still hesitates

(*Angrily*) I cannot be wiser!
Cecil (*calling*) Robert Dudley.

Dudley strides in, carrying his rapier and belt. He chucks them down, glances at Cecil, stands bristling before Elizabeth, then goes down on one knee. For a moment his and Elizabeth's glances meet

Elizabeth Well, sir, rise, and tell it.

Dudley rises, flashes a resentful look at Cecil, and sneers

Dudley Haven't you been told?
Elizabeth Not by you.
Dudley No—*I* have been kept outside your door! Three days! Three nights!
Elizabeth Tell it.
Dudley There was a fair at Abingdon. She didn't go herself. But she sent all her servants.
Cecil So she was alone.
Dudley I didn't know she was alone; I was in London.
Cecil Why all her servants—was she so kind?
Dudley . . . Yes.
Elizabeth I never heard you say so.
Dudley . . . No.
Cecil Well, sir.
Dudley They came back in the evening. And found her. On the floor of the hall. Below the stairs.
Cecil With her neck broken.
Dudley I was in London.
Cecil And your agents?
Dudley What "agents"?
Cecil Oh come, sir.
Dudley I didn't *hear* of it until that night!
Cecil How did you hear of it?
Dudley How? . . . God forgive me, right gladly.
Elizabeth Oh, Robin!
Dudley And you?
Elizabeth God pity me, right gladly, too.
Cecil These past six months, sir, you have put it around that your wife was sick and like to die.
Dudley Yes.
Cecil And was she?
Dudley No.
Cecil These stairs, now . . .
Dudley Elmwood. Polished.
Cecil Ah, polished. She slipped, then.
Dudley I suppose so.
Cecil It was an accident; she fell, from the stairs.
Dudley I suppose so.
Elizabeth Robin, she was lying fifteen feet from the stairs—she was thrown!
Dudley . . . Yes! Yes. She was thrown! No, not by me. Or by my agency. She threw herself.
Elizabeth Herself—but why?
Dudley Because she *knew* that I would heat of it—right gladly.
Elizabeth Oh God . . .

Dudley I put it around that she was sick and like to die because I hoped —God damn me black—I hoped that one who loved me or desired my favour might—do it. Well, now. One who loved me and desired my favour, *has.*

Elizabeth . . . Oh, Robin, either this is true or else you are a devil.

Dudley You must decide that, madam. I've done.

Elizabeth But can there be such love? Robin, I would not do that for you.

Dudley Well, love is never equal. I would for you.

Elizabeth (*to Cecil*) Sir, I think this gentleman is innocent.

Cecil is unresponsive

Well, speak.

Cecil Am I to say what I think, Your Grace, or what you want to hear?

Elizabeth Oh, Cecil, can they never be the same?

Cecil (*with a shrug*) Then I say, with Mary Stuart: "Let them do it."

Dudley What's this?

Cecil Sir, the Queen believes you innocent—and I am ready to believe you innocent—but the Queen, alas, is not the country, nor am I. And you must understand. . . .

Dudley I understand no word you say. Can't you speak like a man?

Cecil To speak like a "man", sir: if the Queen takes you to bed she will lie down Elizabeth the First and rise the second Mrs Dudley.

Dudley Zounds! (*He lunges for his sword*)

Elizabeth Put that up! (*She gets up, goes and stands below the cloth of state*) You may withdraw.

Dudley I?

Elizabeth Yes, Robin.

Dudley And he stays?

Elizabeth Yes, Robin.

Dudley stares for a moment, then snatches up his rapier and turns to Cecil

Dudley Cecil, you have ruined me, and I will not forget it.

Cecil You are wrong, sir, I have saved you. And belike I have made your fortune. And you will forget it.

Dudley snatches a bow at Elizabeth, and goes

Elizabeth Cecil, were the summers better than they are now, when you were a child?

Cecil Your Grace . . . ? Yes, Your Grace, I share that common illusion. The summers then were nothing but sunshine. I and the weather have declined together.

Elizabeth Who raised you, Cecil?

Cecil My father and my mother, madam.

Elizabeth It is not sunshine you remember; it is love. My father killed my mother and disowned me, and I can't remember a summer when it was not raining after that. I was raised by cautious strangers in the

shadows, between prisons. I was taught; mathematics, Latin, Greek, and caution, too well; and saw too soon where love could lead. Prisons were familiar, and so I put my heart into protective custody. But, Cecil, I mislaid the key, and it has lain in darkness, cold and calcifying these twenty years. And, Cecil, Robin had a magic word, which opened doors for me. You said that you would be my servant and my friend, and will you be my jailer?

Cecil is moved, but . . .

Cecil Something of each, Your Grace. Your Grace's Councillor.

Elizabeth looks at him

Elizabeth Aye. Well then. To Council.
Cecil And—the gentleman?
Elizabeth (*going*) To prison.
Cecil Your Grace.

She hears the discreet satisfaction in his voice and turns

Elizabeth But, Cecil, we believe him innocent. And if from now until your dying day, you whisper one word to the contrary; we will punish you.

Elizabeth and Cecil exit

The LIGHTS *change. Thunder sounds* **2**

Knox enters in a dripping cloak. He shakes it, water falling in a puddle at his feet. He looks up

Knox Welcome to Scotland. And welcome to St Andrew's Kirk, but lately called "Cathedral"—for it is nae long since a great fat "bishop", in "vestments"—like a prostitute in her undergarments—was wont to jabber forth the Word of God in heathen Latin from that very pulpit —tchah! (*He goes to the pulpit, flips down the cross, flips up the drape, is about to continue his address, then checks and sniffs*) D'you know what I smell here? (*He sniffs again at the pulpit*) Aye, perfume. (*He looks round*) The whole place needs scrubbin'! It still reeks of Catholicism! (*He controls himself and walks away*) Well, well, yon fat lad'll no enjoy his "tithes" where he is now. We hastened him where he come from (*jabbing downwards*) wi' a length of rope. And you'll look hard for a Catholic priest in Scotland now. Scotsmen can stand upright! We have a godly governance . . . ! Or did until today. Today it seems once more we have a Queen amongst us. And that's my matter. (*He goes briskly to the pulpit and mounts it*) Beloved brethren: certain of the Ancient Fathers make a question of it whether women have immortal souls like men or else like animals are morsels of mere Nature. (*He breaks off and leans forward confidentially*) Er, this is my First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women. Yes, I, John Knox that am the Father

of the Kirk and spake with Calvin as a friend, regard myself as naething mair than a wee trumpet in the hands of the Almighty—and if that's not humility, I'd like to know what is. (*He resumes his formal academic manner*) Now. If the Fathers make a question of it, then it is in doubt. Doubt is a lesser thing than certainty. It is a certainty that men have souls. So: Woman is a lesser thing than Man. (*He leans forward; impressively*) That being so, the Regiment of women *over* men is monstrous —and we must take it as a visitation and a punishment—as was proved upon us lately by that tiger Mary Guise, as proves upon the English by that wolf Elizabeth, and as will prove upon us once again by that she-cat Mary Stuart, now unhappily amongst us following the death—the *mysterious* death—of her wee French husband. No more of that. They that have ears, let them hear. He was, they say, unable to supply her raging appetite.

The LIGHTS *change to exterior*

Knox sits, disappearing.

A Bagpiper enters, playing, followed by Mary wearing crimson. She sits. Ladies, Rizzio and Nau follow, all in grey silk aflutter with white favours. Last come the Scots Lords wearing black faintly relieved by sombre plaids. The entourage groups itself about Mary. The Scots Lords stand in a stiff line behind the solemn Bagpiper, who plays on

Mary and her entourage have difficulty in suppressing their amusement. Seeing this, Morton steps forward from among the Lords and jabs the Bagpiper in the ribs. Startled, he stops and his instrument falls silent with a long-drawn melancholy wail. Mary registers the stone-faced Lords

Mary My lords, forgive us. Our ear is not yet tuned to this wild instrument.
Morton Certainly, madam, it is no lute.

Rizzio picks out a mocking little chord on the strings of his beribboned instrument

Mary (*sharply*) Davie—have done. Where is Lord Bothwell?
Bothwell (*stepping forward*) Madam.
Mary Here, sir. . . . (*She goes and gives him a purse*) We thank you for conducting us from France in safety, through such storms.
Bothwell (*looking up at her*) Were there storms, madam? I didn't notice.
Mary Ah—a Scot can turn a compliment!
Bothwell Aye—given a strong stimulus. Thank you!
Mary Will you remain in Edinburgh?
Bothwell I am the Lord-Lieutenant of the *Border*, madam.

Mary sits again, straight-backed and formal

Mary They tell me you steal sheep across the border, Bothwell.
Bothwell Aye, madam, English sheep.

Mary We would not have our cousin Elizabeth provoked.
Bothwell Oh, they're not her sheep. They're Harry Percy's.
Mary Lord Bothwell, we have come here to rule.
Bothwell And welcome to Your Grace's bonny face.

Bothwell exits

Mary Morton, this Border raiding must be stopped.
Morton It can't be stopped, Your Grace. Lord Bothwell is head of the Clan Hepburn.
Mary So?
Morton The Border is Hepburn country.
Mary All Scotland is my country, my lord.
Morton But Your Grace has no men.
Mary But haven't you—my Lord in Council—men?
Morton Aye, madam. *We* have.
Mary Well, no doubt we will atune ourselves to both your music and your manners. Now, we will to supper.
Morton Now we must to kirk, madam.
Mary "Must" we?
Nau (*in quick confidential warning*) Yes.

Mary swallows her anger and shrugs

Mary Well then, to kirk.

Mary rises. The LIGHTS *change. Two Lords move the throne into position, and Mary sits in it. The Lords and entourage countermarch into position, all looking upwards at the pulpit, on which the* LIGHTS *come up to reveal Knox*

Knox You may read in Revelations of a Great Whore; dressed in scarlet; sitting on a throne.

There is a stir among the entourage; they look at Mary

Mary If I had known your text, good Master Knox, I would have worn a different garment.
Knox Nae doubt.
Mary Now that you have seen my garment, no doubt you will change your text.
Knox I have nae mind to.
Rizzio Then you insult the Queen.
Knox Signor Rizzio, they tell me you're Her Grace's favourite musician. What more ye may be to Her Grace, God knows. You're not a theologian. The Great Whore in the Book of Revelations is no Queen—though Queens may be great whores—she is the Church of Rome!
Mary Now prove that, Master Knox, or by Heaven I will have God's Trumpet scoured—for I find it something dirty.
Knox Prove it, quotha! Secret murders and strange painted vices, whispering together in the shadows of the Vatican is thought by some sufficient proof.

There is a murmur of approval from the Lords

Screeching choirs of castratos and great bronze bells to drown the outcries of the poor is thought by some sufficient proof!

A louder murmur from the Lords. Knox is intoxicated

Elaborate, blasphemous, tinkling show in place of sober piety is thought by some . . . Aye, madam, you may laugh!

Mary Marry I must. I have heard this vulgar stuff a hundred times before and know how to refute it.

Knox Do so.

Mary Shall I?

Rizzio Briefly.

Mary Suppose the Holy Father and his priests are all imperfect as you'd have them. What of that? Because there are no perfect judges, is there no such thing as justice? Priests are all men, and since our father Adam fell imperfection has been part of every man's essential nature. But it is accidental to the Church, which in its essence is, was and always will be perfect.

Rizzio Brava! Multa brava!

Knox (*smiling quite kindly*) Well now, my lords, it seems we are to have a little disputation here.

Nau No—no . . .

Rizzio Yes. Avanti—trounce him!

Knox What—will you back your little fighting hen against John Knox?

Mary I am willing, Master Knox.

Knox (*kindly*) Good. (*He turns away, looks over the audience, his manner musing, gentle, academic*) What is the essence of your Church, Your Grace?

Mary Its essence?

Knox Aye. It is not the Mass?

Mary It is.

Knox What is this Mass?

Mary It is the sacrament whereat the priest offers to God the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

Knox (*quickly, as not having heard*) Who offers it?

Mary . . . It is a sacrament.

Knox Who offers it?

Mary The priest.

Knox The priest. . . . (*His voice is not quite steady on the word. Then he continues as before*) Without the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, could any soul hope for redemption?

Mary No.

Knox Can God refuse that sacrifice, when it is offered?

Mary He will not.

Knox Can he? (*Warningly*) Remembering that the Son who is sacrificed, the Father who is offered are both—(*breathing hard now*)—one God?

Mary I see where you would lead me.

Knox Daren't you follow?
Mary You are insolent!
Knox A very royal argument.
Mary No. God cannot refuse the sacrifice when it is offered.
Knox Then God is at the mercy of the priest.

There is a murmur of satisfaction from the Lords, but Knox ascends now to a level of frightening passion, though his voice is at first low

And my soul is at the mercy of the priest. For we can only traffic at the priest's permission. Christ's sacrifice is a cold spring, put here for my soul to drink at freely—which else must perish in this *desert* of a world, But now the Church has led this spring into a tank, and on this tank the priest has put a tap—the Mass—by which he turns Christ's mercy on and off and sells it by the dram!
Mary Hold there . . . !
Knox Aye, madam, hold fast will I—for he will sell it into hands still red with the murder of a husband——

Mary leaps up from her chair

—hands still hot from groping, slake the thirst of carnal fever with it, ladle it down mouths still wet from filthy exercise, sell it unto Satan. . . .
Mary Come down from there! By God, come down or answer for your disobedience with your *head!*
Knox "By God," she says, blaspheming in His very house!
Mary This is no house of God! This is a market—where a scurrilous low peasant brings his dirty produce—(*she whirls on the lords*)—and buys treason from disloyal lords!
Nau Madam. . . .
Knox (*tolerantly*) Peace! She is young. (*He descends*)
Mary Quit us!
Knox And passionate.
Mary Go!

Knox moves towards the exit, the Lords following

Ourselves we will to our own chapel—to hear Mass!
Knox Madam, I am sorry for you; make a marriage.

Knox and the Lords go

Mary (*crying after them*) Save your sorrow for yourself, John Knox! For I may make a marriage that will give this country cause for sorrow.

All go. A fanfare sounds

The LIGHTS *change. The fanfare modulates to an organ chord* **3**

A Bishop and a Cleric enter and move to the pulpit, plain-chanting

Bishop God save the Queen.
Cleric And all the Royal Family.
Bishop God save the Duke and Duchess.
Cleric And both their charming children.
Bishop God save all Barons, Earls, Viscounts and Baronets.
Cleric And the ladies they have married.
Bishop God bless the Squire.
Cleric And the Squire's wife.
Bishop And the Squire's Bailiff.
Cleric And the Constable.
Bishop And the Overseer of the Highway.
Cleric And the Overseer of the Poor.

During the above, they have replaced the Catholic cross and drape, been worried by the effect, replaced them with a more discreet cross and drape, and congratulated each other. The Bishop mounts into the pulpit where he now concludes

Bishop God bless all persons in positions of authority. (*He smiles at his congregation and begins his address*) Steering our course between the Scylla of Rome and the Carybdis of Geneva, we in the Church of England cultivate the quality of moderation. Not one of the heroic virtues. No, compared with courage, and conviction, moderation is a modest matter. Sometimes—as I am aware—a laughing matter. So be it. The block and the bonfire are not laughing matters, and I would rather be the object of your ridicule than of your fear, will gladly spend Eternity in some quite humble mansion of my Father's house if I may get there without blood or fire. . . . And that, at this point in our history, is not so easy as you might suppose. No, I am not ashamed to lift my voice and pray: (*in plain chant*) God Save the Queen.

Dudley, Cecil and Clerks enter, plain chanting a descant

All A-a-a-a-a-aaamen-en.

A blown-up contemporary print of St James, labelled, flies in over the table. Dudley is adjusting a new robe and chain with fierce satisfaction. Cecil smiles **4**

Cecil Well, sir Councillor, I said I should make your fortune.
Dudley And that I should prove ungrateful. There you were wrong.
Cecil We shall see. A word in your ear. Do not seem too ready in the business I have broached to you.
Dudley No.
Walsingham (*off*) Ho there—the Queen!
Cecil Let me persuade you.
Dudley So.

Elizabeth enters with Walsingham. She affects surprise at seeing Dudley

Elizabeth How, Master Cecil, what does *this* fellow here?

All laugh at the Queen's little joke

Dudley (*kneeling*) He kneels, serves, loves.
Elizabeth Well. Come then, Gentlemen. Walsingham.

They sit. Walsingham busies himself with papers

Walsingham The new Dean for Durham. It is between Doctor Glover and Doctor Boze.
Elizabeth Which?
Walsingham Glover is three parts Catholic.
Elizabeth Walsingham for Doctor Boze.
Cecil I also, madam. There are two many Catholics in the North already. Too close to the Border.

Walsingham scribbles as Elizabeth speaks

Elizabeth To the Lord Bishop at Durham. Reverend Father in God. We have heeded your request to name a person. Long thought and anxious prayer alike conclude in Doctor Boze. She that hath you ever in her mind and care, your loving Sovereign, Elizabeth, et cetera.

A Clerk goes with the letter to the Bishop in the pulpit as Elizabeth continues, to Dudley

You see how we dispatch here, Councillor.

The Bishop glances at the paper

Bishop To the Queen's Majesty at St James. May it please Your Grace, this Doctor Boze inclines towards Geneva and the people hereabouts alas bend hard the other way. We fear he will prove contumaceous. May it please Your Grace to think upon the Reverend Doctor Culpepper.

The Cleric looks modest

This gentleman is moderate, learned, lowly and discreet. He loves not dispute. Besides, he is known to us. (*He hands the letter to the Clerk*)

The Clerk takes the letter back to the table, the Cleric and Bishop looking anxiously after him, the Bishop murmuring

Eternally Your Grace's grateful servant Hugh, Dunelmiensis.
Elizabeth Reverenced Father. The multiplying merits of your nephew are known to us. Notwithstanding, further thought and yet extended prayer confirm our former choice. But we would not be peremptory.
Bishop It's Boze. (*He sits*)

The LIGHTS *go down on the pulpit*

Walsingham Good.
Elizabeth Glover is the better man.
Cecil But Boze the better watchdog. And Your Grace has need of watchdogs on the Scottish Border, now.

Elizabeth (*alert*) Why? What news from Scotland?
Cecil It comes from Madrid, Your Grace. It is quite certain that the King of Spain will marry his son to Mary Stuart.
Elizabeth . . . Well then, it is certain.
Cecil Your Grace, it must not be.
Elizabeth What then?

Cecil does not answer

Walsingham It cannot be, Your Grace; war rather.
Cecil War with Spain?
Elizabeth What then? Speak!

Cecil hesitates

Cecil Spain would not marry his son to Scotland, if he could marry him here.
Elizabeth Cecil, I have told you not to speak of this again.
Cecil I spoke at your command, Your Grace.
Elizabeth Oh, Cecil, you are too clever to be honest. . . . (*She rises, uneasy*)
Cecil (*pressing his advantage*) If a Spanish army comes at us from Scotland it comes through a Catholic North, on a Catholic Crusade, with a Catholic Queen at its head. And the North won't fight. . . .
Elizabeth And would the South accept a Catholic King? Walsingham, would you?

All look at Walsingham

Cecil (*quickly*) No King; a Consort.
Walsingham He would not be offered the Crown Matrimonial?
Cecil No.
Walsingham And a Protestant marriage?
Cecil Of course.
Walsingham It is a way, Your Grace. If he will take those terms.
Elizabeth He will not.
Cecil Then give him war, Your Grace, and then give even me a sword—but only then. And he would come by sea, we might resist. But if he comes by land what army can we send against those Spanish infantry? We are Sunday bowmen; and they are men of iron; and they have proved themselves of such a sort that where they set their foot no grass grows, thereafter. War with Spain is England lost.

It makes a silence

Elizabeth And the Prince of Spain is a dribbling dwarf! A diminutive monster who foams at the mouth!
Cecil I cannot answer for his person, Majesty; I will answer for my policy.

Dudley shifts

Elizabeth Aye, what do you think, Councillor Robin?
Dudley Too much to speak, Your Grace.
Elizabeth Then quit my Council.

Dudley Robin thinks, war rather, death rather, let England go. Your Grace's Councillor thinks no, let love go; Her Grace must keep England.

Elizabeth shifts and looks away

Elizabeth (*harshly*) Love? Who spoke of love? (*Holding out her hand to Cecil*) For Madrid.

Cecil hands her a paper

Elizabeth (*glancing at it*) Who wrote this?
Cecil I, Your Grace.
Elizabeth We did not think you had such wooing terms.
Cecil I was young once, Your Grace.
Elizabeth Logic compels us to believe you. For Madrid.

A Messenger exits with the letter

Dudley's head is sunk in apparent gloom

Cecil, what can I do for this gentleman?
Cecil There was an Earl of Leicester once in England.
Elizabeth Earl . . . ? You are very sudden friends.
Cecil I hope it truly, madam.
Dudley Your Grace, I am not worthy.
Elizabeth Then be so, Lord Earl. (*Raising her voice*) We will receive the King of Spain's reply at Hampton.

Cecil and Dudley rise and bow. St James flies out as Hampton Court flies in. Cecil and Dudley meanwhile meet down stage, while Elizabeth and Walsingham "freeze". **5**

Cecil Well, sir, I had not thought you were so politic.
Dudley Neither had I. I do not relish this.
Cecil We dig for gold because we relish gold, sir. Not because we relish digging. Do you want to break off?
Dudley No.
Cecil (*moving to go*) Come, then.
Dudley What is my part this time?
Cecil Perfect silence. Come.

They approach the table, bow together, then speak together

Cecil
Dudley } Your Grace.

Cecil and Dudley sit

Elizabeth You arrive together, Gentlemen.
Cecil We met on the road, Your Grace. Is the Spanish Ambassador come?
Elizabeth (*to a Clerk*) Admit him.

De Quadra enters. He goes swiftly to Elizabeth and kisses her hand with affectionate respect

Elizabeth De Quadra.
De Quadra Your Grace.
Elizabeth How does your master?
De Quadra Your Grace. His Catholic Majesty is all transported. He thinks Madrid a little town in Paradise. And only fears to have curtailed his future lot by tasting Heaven here.
Elizabeth We thank His Majesty. And, His Majesty's fair son?
De Quadra His son! Your Grace, a heart of thistledown. He floats.
Elizabeth Then we shall float together; for we are even as you say he is.
De Quadra *Madam . . .*
Cecil What dowry does His Majesty propose?
De Quadra Ah, Cecil, my good friend, the King would dower such a match with the whole world. . . .
Cecil But failing that.

De Quadra whips out a roll of paper and places it deftly into Cecil's hands, gliding on to Elizabeth in the same movement

De Quadra This—(*showing a locket*)—is a likeness of the Prince.
Elizabeth His Highness is well favoured, if this speaks true.
De Quadra Would it might, Your Grace, but alas it is not the handiwork of a god.
Elizabeth De Quadra, such a face presages a strong mind.
De Quadra Even so.
Elizabeth Deal honestly, de Quadra.
De Quadra Your Grace, His Highness, it is true, is—highly-strung. But there, what would you? The spirit of a giant in a little human frame.
Elizabeth How little?
De Quadra His Highness is compact, Your Grace. I would not say *little. . . .*
Elizabeth Would you say tall?
De Quadra Tall. . . . Alas, Your Grace, how tall is tall?
Elizabeth (*indicating Dudley*) This gentleman is tall.

Dudley rises. Cecil looks up from the scroll

Cecil This is well.
De Quadra I think so, too, sir.
Cecil Yet not so well that it could not be better. What is this of Spanish galleys in our Channel ports?
Walsingham What? That sounds more like war than wedding!
De Quadra Ah, Master Walsingham, how do you do? (*To Elizabeth*) The galleys are for use against His Majesty's rebellious subjects in the Netherlands.
Walsingham Our best trade is with the Netherlands, Your Grace.
De Quadra It will be better, when the Netherlands are pacified.
Walsingham The Netherlanders are good friends to England, and to God.
De Quadra With deference, Master Walsingham, they may be your

friends, God selects his own. And as for England—are rebel subjects anywhere good friends to any sovereign?

Elizabeth Spanish galleys in our ports might make me rebel subjects here, Your Excellency.

De Quadra Well, well. The galleys are a lesser matter.

Elizabeth You have a greater?

De Quadra The form of marriage.

Cecil English.

De Quadra With a Catholic marriage first. (*It is half a question, half an assertion*)

Cecil After.

De Quadra Then immediately after.

Walsingham Why immediately?

De Quadra (*with a shrug*) The same day.

Walsingham Why the same day?

De Quadra (*testily*) Before the *night*, good Master Walsingham. In Catholic eyes your English form of marriage would be—(*he spreads his hands, delicately*)—a form.

Walsingham As would the Catholic form in English eyes.

De Quadra *Some* English eyes. (*He says this significantly and looks at Cecil*)

Cecil Immediately after.

De Quadra Excellent. The—er—form of the form is important too. Your Grace must know—for I alas am told to tell Your Grace—my master will not have his son's soul jeopardized by any form which makes a mock of God.

Elizabeth Then tell your master that we think ourselves as careful of our soul as any king in christendom and would permit no form which mocked at God!

De Quadra Your English Church is—er—flexible, Your Grace. Here it is one thing, there another. Here a priest who is almost a Catholic, there is a priest who is no-one knows what. There have lately been some church appointments, as that of Doctor Boze at Durham, which have much dismayed my master.

Elizabeth Zounds, sir, will you make our church appointments now?

De Quadra Oh dear! Of course these vexious questions would not be, if His Highness were to wed some Catholic Queen. (*He lets it hang*)

Cecil and Dudley look at Elizabeth. She sighs and raises her voice

Elizabeth To the Lord Bishop at Durham!

The LIGHTS *come up on the pulpit, where the Bishop is attentive*

Reverend Father in God. We have considered your wise words concerning Doctor Boze. The man is disputatious. If, there fore, it is not too late, appoint instead the Reverend Doctor Glover. . . .

Bishop Glover! Your Grace, the man's a rampant Papist!

Elizabeth You see from this that weighed against her care for you and

for the spiritual welfare of her realm, no sacrifice of vain consistency is too much for your loving Sovereign Elizabeth, et cetera.

Bishop The woman's mad!

The Bishop sits. The LIGHTS *fade on the pulpit*

De Quadra Excellent. And who can say but that the tender influence of love will heal up these unhappy differences, his golden dart transfixing two young hearts make one of two great kingdoms. The galleys are a matter for negotiation, naturally.

Cecil Naturally.

De Quadra May I enjoy your company tonight?

Cecil Tonight I am engaged, Your Excellency.

De Quadra Tomorrow then?

Cecil Tomorrow I shall be in Canterbury.

De Quadra Well, let us not delay too long. Youth will be served. Your Grace, I go now to write that which will transport my master; would I had words worthy of my theme. (*He makes a graceful bow and continues to Cecil, backing*) Next week, perhaps?

Cecil Your Excellency's servant.

De Quadra Madam, you have made me happy. (*He gives another bow*)

Elizabeth Then we are quits.

De Quadra Madam. (*He gives another bow: he is almost gone*)

Elizabeth Your Excellency——

De Quadra stops

—we had thought your Prince had lost his heart to the Queen of Scots.

De Quadra The . . . ? Your Grace, the Queen of Scots: who remembers the pale moon, when the great sun rises?

De Quadra gives a final bow, and is gone

Elizabeth Well, Cecil, will it do?

Cecil I do not know, Your Grace.

Walsingham Nor I, Your Grace. I think they mean to make us clients.

Elizabeth I think it will not do. And thank God for it.

Cecil Madam, it must seem to do; until the Queen of Scots has married elsewhere.

Elizabeth Then let her marry soon.

Cecil I think she will.

Elizabeth Perhaps we can arrange a marriage for her.

Cecil That would be best, Your Grace. I have intelligence from Scotland coming to Nonsuch.

Elizabeth Mp. To Nonsuch, then.

The Hampton cloth flies out and the Nonsuch flies in. Dudley and Cecil move downstage. Elizabeth and Walsingham "freeze" **6**

Cecil Well, my lord, the dice are falling in our favour. Are you ready for your final throw?

Dudley Cecil, why are you doing this?
Cecil Because it is good policy for England.
Dudley And what is it for Cecil?
Cecil Good policy, too. You have her heart and always will.

Dudley grips him hard by the arm and growls desperately

Dudley Then why may I not marry *here?*
Cecil That, over my grave; the other I will help you to. Will you have it?
Dudley (*dropping his hand*) Yes.
Cecil To it, then. You that way, I this.

Cecil and Dudley approach the table from different directions and meet there

Dudley (*sitting*) Well met, Master Cecil.
Cecil (*sitting*) My lord.
Elizabeth How is de Quadra?
Cecil He languishes a little, but we keep him in good heart. We feed him promises.
Elizabeth "We"?
Cecil My lord had dinner with de Quadra and myself the other day.
Elizabeth You are grown quite intimate.
Cecil (*with a little laugh and half bow to Dudley*) Oh, I—would not say "intimate".
Elizabeth You sound like de Quadra. Admit the messenger from Scotland.
Walsingham Davison!

Davison enters. He kneels. Elizabeth regards him approvingly, and motions him to rise

Elizabeth So, sir, the Spanish embassy to Scotland is gone home.
Davison Yes, Your Grace.
Elizabeth And how likes that the Queen of Scots?
Davison She is enraged, Your Grace.
Elizabeth (*with a grunt of satisfaction*) Ha. And does her rage become her?
Davison Yes, Your Grace. (*Defiantly*) All moods become her.

Elizabeth stares

Elizabeth God's death, send no more *young* ambassadors to Scotland, Cecil. (*She rises, goes and examines Davison as an object of deep, half-amused interest*) Describe her, then.
Davison Your Grace, I cannot.
Elizabeth Cannot? Is she tall?
Davison As Your Grace.
Elizabeth Thin?
Davison As Your Grace.
Elizabeth We are twins?
Davison No, Your Grace.
Elizabeth What colour is her hair?
Davison Your Grace, her hair is shadow coloured.

Elizabeth God's death, he's written poetry. Her eyes?
Davison Her eyes change colour with her moods, Your Grace.
Elizabeth You seem much taken with her moods. Has she many?
Davison Yes, Your Grace. Sometimes she is right childish, and sometimes . . . (*He breaks off*)
Elizabeth Well?
Davison Right royal, Your Grace.
Elizabeth Hoo! And sometimes, as we hear, she is sportive, hey? Gallante, hey? Wanton?
Davison Yes, Your Grace. And cruel and wilful and unfair. But then there come such sudden sinkings, such declension into soft submission, as sets a man on a high horse. (*His voice vibrates with an emotion too serious to laugh away*)

Elizabeth leaves him, on a shaky laugh

Elizabeth God's death, it ought not to be hard to find a suitor for the lady, Cecil.

She turns to find Cecil and Dudley making furious faces at Davison, Cecil with his fists raised above his head. He converts the motion hastily into a stroking of his hair as she turns, but she is not deceived

What? What's this? (*She looks at Davison*) What? (*She gives a snort of mirth*) You think we are jealous of this moon calf? (*She seats herself, and continues more formally*) What is this mountebank, Rizzio?
Davison Her playfellow, Your Grace.
Elizabeth No more?
Davison Her Councillor, Your Grace.
Elizabeth No more?
Davison I do not know, Your Grace. But I do not think he is the man that she would love.
Elizabeth Why not? Come, we are not angry with you. (*She smiles*) Why is Signor Rizzio not the man that she would love? Is he ugly?
Davison It is not that, Your Grace. (*He looks at her and ventures a half-smile in response to hers*) He is small.
Elizabeth Ah—like you.
Davison Yes, Your Grace.

Elizabeth goes to him and rubs his hair

Elizabeth The Queen of Scots likes tall men, does she?
Davison Yes, Your Grace.
Elizabeth Poor boy. (*Briskly, cheerfully*) Well then, Master Cecil, it seems that we are looking for a tall . . . (*She breaks off and freezes. The life drains from her motionless body. She looks at Cecil, at Dudley, back to Cecil*

Cecil bows his head. Elizabeth comprehends it all. She looks away. White-faced, she breathes out

O-o-o-oh . . .

She looks quickly at Dudley with a last flash of hope. But now he too bows his head

(*Again*) O-o-o-oh . . . (*Her empty eyes wander to Davison*) You, sir, get you gone; you are lovesick.

Davison goes

Oh, Cecil.

Cecil Your Grace . . .

Elizabeth I *see* it, Cecil, I *see* it's very good. Protestant, English, loyal, a nobleman to boot—Earl of Leicester. And tall. It should do well—eh? Robin?

Dudley Your Grace, I am green in Council—these gentlemen are better able . . .

Elizabeth Faugh! (*She gestures*) Go.

Dudley moves to go

Go both.

Dudley goes. Cecil follows. They escape like schoolboys

(*Gently contemplating*) Oh, Robin . . .

Walsingham discreetly gathers his papers and moves to go

You are going, sir?

Walsingham I thought Your Grace might wish to stay this business until . . . (*His voice tails*)

Elizabeth Do you presume to know what we might wish?

He sits, very quietly

What business?

Walsingham A conspiracy against Your Grace's life, of Catholic gentlemen, in the County of Durham.

Elizabeth Against my life?

Walsingham Yes, Your Grace.

Elizabeth Well. Tell Cecil.

Walsingham Your Grace. (*He rises and moves to go*)

Elizabeth In the county of Durham?

Walsingham Yes, Your Grace.

Elizabeth nods

Walsingham goes

Elizabeth looks at Dudley's empty chair

Elizabeth Oh—Councillor . . . (*She raises her head and softly begins to speak*)

The LIGHTS *softly come up on the pulpit and the gravely listening Bishop there*

To the Lord Bishop at Durham. Good Father, we trouble you too much. But both the gentlemen that we have named are too extreme, for this time, and that place. Therefore, let it be your kinsman's. For you tell us that he is a man of balance. And we are like a sleep-walker who wakes to find herself on a high roof, in darkness—and without a hand to hold her. Forgive, Elizabeth, et cetera . . . (*She is going out on the last words, her hand just momentarily placed on Dudley's chair before passing on*)

The Bishop hurries down from the pulpit, subdued but urgent

Bishop May it please Your Grace, my nephew is gone from here and is presently in Bristol where . . .

Elizabeth (*ringingly*) Lord Bishop! (*She whirls*) Do as we command or by God we will unfrock you! (*She takes a great gasp of air and almost shouts*) Elizabeth! *Queen!*

A fanfare sounds. Elizabeth exits

The Nonsuch cloth flies out. The LIGHTS *change* 7

Mary enters. She is on Cecil's arm. Nau, Rizzio and Ladies follow. Mary seats herself

Mary Cecil, you are very welcome. We hear you are the wisest Councillor in Christendon. We think our cousin kind to part with you. The more so, as we know her pleasant purpose.

Cecil Your Grace, her purpose is most pleasant, yes.

Mary Aye, for you are sent, we hear, to crack a joke with us. But we must warn you, sir, the edge is off it, for it is foretold.

Cecil A joke, Your Grace?

Mary Oh. Davie, we are misinformed. Forgive me, sir. There was a waggish fellow here the other day who said your purpose was to offer me the hand of Robert Dudley.

Cecil Madam, that is my purpose.

Mary How straight he keeps his face. Excellent, sir. If you were not a Councillor you could be a comedian.

Cecil Indeed, Your Grace, I so lack comedy I cannot understand how you find the offer comic.

Mary Sir, do not persist. Your offer is an insult . . .

Cecil Your Grace?

Mary Cecil, was Robert Dudley unfit for Elizabeth? And yet fit for me?

Cecil Nay, now I am quite confounded. Unfit for my mistress? She never thought of him, Your Grace. He has her high regard indeed, but no, no, not her heart.

Mary No, that she has given to the Prince of Spain.

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