

BY ANY OTHER NAME...

by

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PROLOGUE:

SUPER: William Shakespeare dedicated his one hundred fifty four sonnets to a man known only as Mr. W.H. This man has never been identified ...

FADE IN:

INT. COURT OF STAR CHAMBER - DAY

SUPER: Spring, 1593

In the dark council room, a body of Nobles confer among themselves. Included are members of the Queen's Privy Council, WILLIAM CECIL, 1ST BARON BURGHLEY(70), his son, SIR ROBERT CECIL(30) and the ROBERT DEVEREUX, 2ND EARL OF ESSEX(29).

Facing them from the center of the room, sits CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE(29), alone. Behind his worn and tired features, moustache and light goatee, are the remnants of an attractive man. His long, dark brown hair recedes.

The STAR CHAMBER HEAD MINISTER stands --

HEAD MINISTER

Mr. Marlowe, condemning evidence of your heretical writings and insurrection has been brought before this council.

He frowns at Marlowe --

HEAD MINISTER

Yet, you give no defense.

Marlowe lowers his head.

HEAD MINISTER

Therefore, we are bound to adjourn to deliberate final verdict and sentence.

Marlowe watches as Devereux silently speaks to a SECOND MINISTER. The Second Minister stands abruptly --

SECOND MINISTER

This man cannot be allowed to remain free while a verdict and sentence are certain.

DEVEREUX

Should not this man be sent to The Tower?

Cecil looks at Devereux incredulously.

BURGHLEY

My Lords, I will assure this council of Mr. Marlowe's continued presence.

HEAD MINISTER

Mr. Marlowe, you will report daily on your position to this council.

Marlowe nods to Lord Burghley. Devereux looks at Marlowe, disgusted.

HEAD MINISTER (CONT'D)

This council is adjourned.

Marlowe stands and watches as the council solemnly retires.

EXT. DAME ELEANOR BULL'S ROOMING HOUSE - EVENING

The quiet house sits at the end of a dark road.

INT. DAME ELEANOR BULL'S ROOMING HOUSE - EVENING

Marlowe sits at the table in a small, dark room. A single candle's light flickers, casting shadows on the walls.

An open leather book and folded parchments are on the table. He writes then stops to read --

MARLOWE

I, Christopher Marlowe, do here state and ordain, in this year of our lord, fifteen hundred ninety-three, that I am

He looks across the room --

MARLOWE (CONT'D)

... and have forever been ... a scoundrel and a rogue.

Suddenly, there's a flash of lightning and immediately a clap of thunder. Marlowe looks out the window as rain falls.

FADE TO BLACK:

The sounds of the falling rain and arriving storm continue.

MARLOWE V.O. (CONT'D)

The daylight has departed, gone
far from the sight of mine eyes,
and I now stand at the shadow's
door.

FADE IN:

EXT. THE SOUTHERN ROAD THROUGH WARWICKSHIRE - NIGHT

SUPER: Ten Years Earlier - Autumn, 1583.

There is a flash of lighting and immediately a clap of
thunder. Dark menacing clouds fill the evening's sky over
the forest. The rain falls hard.

MARLOWE V.O. (CONT'D)

I have cheated. I have lied and
done all manner of things that
bring my head and my heart into
dissent.

A HOODED RIDER appears out of the night. His dark hooded
cloak covers him like a shadow. He rides on the back of a
galloping gray mare.

MARLOWE V.O. (CONT'D)

Will this testament be my last
when all who henceforth doth hear
the name, Marlowe, will know me not?

The heavy rain falls hard on a water soaked road.

MARLOWE V.O. (CONT'D)

Will these words tell of a man,
or a tale of a man known to none?

The mare slows, but the Hooded Rider pushes her.

MARLOWE V.O. (CONT'D)

Do I truly know the man I am? The
man who suckled to his mother's
breast, and stood not in his
father's place at his bequest.

The mare slow cantor frustrates the rider.

MARLOWE V.O. (CONT'D)

Do I know myself to share my heart
and my head to all who seek the
truth?

He pushes her to go faster, but she refuses.

MARLOWE V.O. (CONT'D)
 What is a man in his life but the
 things he hath done, to both foe
 and friend?

Finally, she walks along the sodden road. When the rider tries to push her, she rears. He grabs the reins to keep balanced.

MARLOWE V.O. (CONT'D)
 Do I judge, or do I ask, those
 who have suffered under the course
 of my tongue?

Quickly, he calms the horse, and she drops her hoofs to the road. He walks her, then dismounts.

MARLOWE V.O. (CONT'D)
 My testimony hath placed men in
 harm's way, those who I, and
 others deemed to be not worthy to
 their cause.

He leads the horse down the road as the rain continues to fall.

EXT. THE SOUTHERN ROAD THROUGH WARWICKSHIRE - LATER

The rain continues. The shadowed figures of the Hooded Rider and horse are under an old dilapidated bridge.

MARLOWE V.O. (CONT'D)
 The tale I wish to tell is a grave
 account, of one who with the
 promise of his life, chose to
 walk among men whose hearts are
 as black as night.

A flash of lighting illuminates them, tucked out of the heavy rain.

MARLOWE V.O. (CONT'D)
 Some plotted and planned in the
 shadow of a blasphemous prince
 who sits upon a garland throne.

After a moment, there's a clap of thunder in the distance.

EXT. THE SOUTHERN ROAD THROUGH WARWICKSHIRE - LATER

The rain has subsided, and the rider leads the mare back to the muddy road.

MARLOWE V.O. (CONT'D)

And others, who follow the Lady,
my Queen, are no more the better
in ways of State and political
intrigue, who have given me laud
and made to me their beneficiary.

He mounts the horse, and walks her on the road.

EXT. THE SOUTHERN ROAD THROUGH WARWICKSHIRE - HOURS LATER

The rider arrives at a cross road. The signpost has two
markers. One reads The Town of Edstone two miles to the left
and Cambridge 100 miles to the right.

MARLOWE V.O. (CONT'D)

But, today, I shall speak ill of
no man who acts from their belief.
I, today reveal my heart and my
deeds and await all fate's
judgment hath for me.

The Hooded Rider turns the horse to the left and pushes the
horse into a gallop.

EXT. THE SOUTHERN ROAD THROUGH WARWICKSHIRE - LATER

The Hooded Rider sees a clearing in the road. He rides
forwards, slowly.

MARLOWE (CONT'D)

I, Christopher Marlowe, do state
and ordain in this year of our
lord, fifteen hundred ninety-
three, that I'm of sound mind and
perfect health all in the name of
God, Amen. This is for my Will ...
and is my last testament.

A bright full moon peaks out from behind dark rain clouds as
they move across the sky.

EXT. THE EDSTONE INN - NIGHT

The two-story inn sits back from the road in the clearing,
nuzzled by the threes of the woods. Tucked next to it is a
stable. The Hooded Rider arrives. He dismounts and leads his
horse towards the inn.

A tattered STABLE BOY runs out to take the rider's horse.

INT. THE COMMON ROOM OF THE EDSTONE INN - NIGHT

GROUPS OF MEN sit at tables in conversation. The INNKEEPER and the INNKEEPER'S WIFE fill mugs with ale from a large barrel. A YOUNG MAN(19) sweeps the floor, as he continually watches the men in the room.

THREE SUSPICIOUS MEN sit near the door. SEBASTIAN, the gaunt one, watches guardedly as men enter the inn. MEEKS, the mousy one, finishes his ale as SOMERVILLE, the stout one, bellows --

SOMERVILLE

More drinks!

The Young Man drops his broom, grabs three full mugs and runs to the table. Suddenly, the Hooded Rider enters. Sebastian watches him suspiciously, until he, and all the men in the room are distracted by Somerville's continued oration --

SOMERVILLE (CONT'D)

I drink to the Queen, Elizabeth ...

While all eyes turn to Somerville, the Hooded Rider drops his hood. It's a younger, attractive Christopher Marlowe(19). He's clean shaven, his short, dark brown hair covers the top of his head.

SOMERVILLE (OS)

(CONT'D)

Here is to her Majesty ...

Marlowe glances towards Somerville and his companions, then he notices, standing at their table, the only person in the room who's eyes are on him, the Young Man.

Marlowe and the Young Man's eyes meet for an intense moment of seeming recognition.

Somerville stands --

SOMERVILLE (OS)

(CONT'D)

May her vestal reign soon be a memory ...

MEEKS

Hear, hear!

Men in the room murmur disapprovingly at the toast.

Sebastian silently admonishes his companions, and Somerville sits.

The Young Man turns back to his sweeping, while Marlowe continues to scan the room. He notices ROBERT POLEY(30) seated alone. He strolls back toward him.

Sebastian turns back in time to watch as Marlowe joins Poley.

POLEY

You were to arrive this morning.

MARLOWE

The rains made the roads impassable.

POLEY

Do you bring word?

From a small leather pouch under his cloak, Marlowe retrieves a letter and passes it under the table, unnoticed.

MARLOWE

Sir Thomas ...

Interrupting --

POLEY

Take care. The rats here have ears.

Marlowe looks at a man at the next table. The man suspiciously looks away.

MARLOWE

The Gentleman travels with friends.

POLEY

They will be needed to search every traitor's hole from here to London.

MARLOWE

Where is the man, Somerville?

POLEY

The blustery one who drinks to the Queen.

As Marlowe glances over, he notices Sebastian's gaze and averts his eyes.

POLEY (CONT'D)

You've caught that one's attention.

MARLOWE

Who is he?

POLEY

He is called Sebastian, a Jesuit.

MARLOWE

An assassin?

POLEY

Probably just a rabble-rouser
sent to stir-up Somerville and
the others.

Marlowe resists the urge to look again.

POLEY (CONT'D)

They travel to London tomorrow.

Across the room, Sebastian stares at them. Out of the corner
of his eyes, Poley sees him --

POLEY (CONT'D)

That one's curiosity does not wane.

Marlowe observes Poley's concern.

MARLOWE

What do we do?

POLEY

We take our leave ...

Poley finishes his ale and stands --

POLEY (CONT'D)

You stay, then follow me out.

Sebastian watches disdainfully as Poley leaves. He quickly
calls the Young Man over and whispers into his ear. The Young
Man glances at Marlowe and nods as Sebastian passes him a coin.

After a few moments, Marlowe prepares to leave, when suddenly,
the Young Man places a full mug of ale on the table.

YOUNG MAN

From the gentleman, Sir ...

Marlowe glances towards the table, but smartly avoids looking
Sebastian in the eyes. He raises the mug, shielding his face.
Sebastian speaks to his companions, and they all look at
Marlowe, who looks away.

YOUNG MAN (CONT'D)

An acquaintance, Sir?

MARLOWE

No.

YOUNG MAN

Well, I'd take care ...

The Young Man leans closer --

YOUNG MAN (CONT'D)

These roads hold danger for
travelers like yourself.

The Young Man inconspicuously indicates Sebastian.

MARLOWE

Thank you.

The Young Man nods and smiles. Marlowe notices his features, his handsome face, reddish colored hair, and especially his gray-colored eyes. Marlowe smiles --

MARLOWE (CONT'D)

What are you called?

YOUNG MAN

I am Will.

MARLOWE

Just Will?

YOUNG MAN

Will Shakspere.

MARLOWE

I'm called Kit Marley.

Shakspere nods.

Sebastian observes their cordial exchange.

MARLOWE (CONT'D)

Thank you again Will Shakspere.

Marlowe smiles fondly. Shakspere blushes and averts his eyes.

Suddenly, there's an outburst from across the room --

SEBASTIAN

We leave now!

Marlowe and Shakspere watch as Sebastian drops a crown on the table. He looks daggers at them as he leaves. His companions follow.

EXT. EDSTONE INN - NIGHT

The three men burst from the inn. Sebastian signals the Stable Boy for their horses.

Poley with his horse watches from the shadow of the trees as the three men mount and ride south on the road until they disappear into the night.

Marlowe comes out the inn. Poley steps from the trees.

POLEY
Seems you've frightened the Jesuit.
I will follow them.

MARLOWE
I will come with you.

POLEY
No, you remain here.

MARLOWE
No! I wish to ride ...

Poley strikes Marlowe with his crop --

POLEY
Schoolboy ...

Marlowe stumbles backwards to the ground.

POLEY (CONT'D)
I have no time to dally with you.

Poley mounts his horse.

POLEY (CONT'D)
You wait for, Sir Thomas.

Marlowe gets to his feet.

POLEY (CONT'D)
Tell him to follow south, and I
will meet him with news.

He glares at Marlowe --

POLEY (CONT'D)
Then you will return to Cambridge,
understand?

MARLOWE
Yes.

POLEY

Do as I say, and you might come
through this night alive.

Marlowe's eyes widen as he watches Poley ride off,
disappearing into the night. After a moment, he walks back
into the inn.

EXT. EDSTONE INN - NIGHT - LATER

The rain clouds are gone, and the full moon's bright light
shines down on the darkened inn.

INT. EDSTONE INN - NIGHT - LATER

Marlowe sits alone in the dark, empty room. A single candle
is on his table. The Innkeeper and his Wife watch him
suspiciously from the kitchen area. Shakspere walks over --

SHAKSPERE

Will the gentleman remain the
evening?

MARLOWE

Is there a room?

SHAKSPERE

Yes.

(to the Innkeeper's
Wife)

The gentleman wishes a room.

INNKEEPER'S WIFE

Very good, Sir.

She goes upstairs. Marlowe stares at Shakspere --

MARLOWE

Sit with me.

SHAKSPERE

I am not permitted ...

MARLOWE

Please ...

Shakspere looks at the Innkeeper as he sits.

MARLOWE (CONT'D)

I wait for my companions.

Shakspere smiles suspiciously --

SHAKSPERE
Travelers like yourself?

Marlowe smiles back and nods.

SHAKSPERE (CONT'D)
From where do you travel ...?

MARLOWE
I am at Cambridge ...

He catches himself --

MARLOWE (CONT'D)
I mean ...

SHAKSPERE
I wish I had such opportunities.

MARLOWE
What would you study?

SHAKSPERE
Farming. I love the land. I would
learn what makes it so beautiful.

MARLOWE
Beautiful ...?

SHAKSPERE
Yes. Have you ever seen the
morning dew when it covers a
meadow, and the morning light
reaches across it, turning it all
into a silvery cloak over a green
ocean?

Marlowe chuckles. Shakspeare glares --

SHAKSPERE (CONT'D)
You mock me, Sir?

MARLOWE
On the contrary, your words are
that of a poet, not a farmer. Do
you write them?

SHAKSPERE
For myself.

MARLOWE
Your words are beautiful ...

Marlowe smiles at him --

MARLOWE (CONT'D)
As beautiful as their crafter.

Shakspere blushes and looks away --

MARLOWE (CONT'D)
May I read your writings?

Shakspere gleams, excitingly --

SHAKSPERE
Yes, if you like. I can get them ...

Suddenly, there's a clamor of horses from the road. The Innkeeper looks out the window. Marlowe looks towards the door --

MARLOWE
I fear my companions have arrived.

The Innkeeper's wife comes down the stairs.

MARLOWE (CONT'D)
Madam, I will not need the room.

Shakespeare looks at Marlowe impishly --

SHAKSPERE
Must you leave?

The two young men stare at each other with mischievous smiles. Shakspere grabs Marlowe's hand and leads him through the inn. As they pass the Innkeeper and his Wife, he puts his finger to his lips. Marlowe just nods and grins. Like playful schoolboys, they scurry out the back door.

INT. EDSTONE INN STABLE - MOMENTS LATER

Marlowe sneaks his horse out the back of the stable while Shakspere retrieves his writings from his bedding in the stable. He sees the Stable Boy hiding in the shadow. He points to the men arriving. The boy nods.

The Stable Boy walks out the front of the stable as Shakespeare joins Marlowe out the back.

The boy approaches the riders --

STABLE BOY
May I take your horse, Sir?

EXT. THE WOODS BEHIND THE EDSTONE INN - MINUTES LATER

On a rise that overlooks the inn, Marlowe looks back toward the inn with concern. He watches as four men dismount and go inside.

MARLOWE

I should be there. I must return ...

SHAKSPERE

Did you not want to read this?

He hands Marlowe a leather bound book, tied with a lace. It's filled with loose-folded parchments. Marlowe takes the book and unties it. Shakspere looks on anxiously, as Marlowe unfolds and reads one of the parchments by the light of the bright moon. Shakespeare watches with anticipation. After a few moments, Marlowe smiles --

MARLOWE

Have you really seen faeries in these woods?

The two young men laugh boyishly.

EXT. EDSTONE INN STABLE - NIGHT

Through the window, the inn is lit brightly. The Innkeeper and his guests are gathered and held in the common room by three men.

CAPTAIN MYERS (30) comes out the inn. His gait betrays his military training, but he and the others are plainly dressed. He steps up to THOMAS LUCY (50), a large, stiff-necked gentleman, who waits on his horse.

MYERS

The Innkeepers says Somerville left with two men hours ago, south.

LUCY

No sign of Poley or the courier?

MYERS

He says they followed Somerville.

Frustrated, Lucy turns his horse towards the road and stares out. Myers looks to see the other men looking on with expectation. He barks --

MYERS (CONT'D)

Search the grounds.

The men still on horseback, dismount and move to search the area. The Stable Boy watches as one man cautiously heads towards the stable. Lucy bellows --

LUCY
Captain, gather your men ...

He rides towards the road.

MYERS
Men, mount you horse.

The men run out. They all mount their horses.

The Innkeeper steps to the door and watches as the contingent of men ride south into the night.

EXT. ON THE ROAD - DAWN

Lucy and his men enter Northamptonshire.

In the distance, a rider approaches. It's Poley. Lucy stops his men. Poley rides into the company and sees Lucy.

POLEY
Sir Thomas ...

LUCY
I expected you in Edstone.

Poley gives him a curious look.

LUCY (CONT'D)
Where is Somerville?

POLEY
They are bedded at Aynho.

LUCY
We must make haste, lest we lose
him. Forward men!

Lucy races away. His men follow. Poley looks among the men and sees Myers

POLEY
Captain, did you not meet the
courier Marley at Edstone?

MYERS
No, it was said he rode with you.

Fearfully, Poley looks back on the road. Reluctantly, follows Lucy's men.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE AYNHO INN - MORNING

From his horse, Lucy oversees his men's search of the stables and woods at the inn. Poley speaks with the Innkeeper as men bring Somerville out, restrained. He looks crazed.

LUCY
What of the Jesuit?

POLEY
Somerville's companions abandoned him in the night, when he became mad with drink.

LUCY
I want the Jesuit found.

Lucy rides towards the road.

SOMERVILLE
Your Queen's head will hang from the Tower ...

Myers strikes Somerville with the hilt of his sword. Somerville buckles to the ground.

In the woods, a distance from the inn, Sebastian crouches behind some brush. He glares toward the inn. After a moment, he rises to leave, but looks back towards the ground and crosses himself. He makes his way deeper into the woods.

On the ground, Meeks lies dead. His throat's cut.

EXT. CAMBRIDGE, ENGLAND - MORNING - MONTHS LATER

It's a week before Christmas holiday. On the sprawling campus of Cambridge University, the winter has stripped the trees of all its greenery. Several groups of students, wearing academic gowns, make their way to the class buildings.

INT. CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY CLASSROOM - MORNING

YOUNG MEN sit on rows of benches. PROFESSOR SAMUEL TILLERMAN (40), of literature, stands in front of the room.

The Young Men sit in small factions in discussion. ROBERT GREENE (20's), an upperclassman, sits among his companions. He rises --

GREENE
In Metamorphosis, Ovid exposes Venus' obsession to intervene and save Julius Caesar.

TILLERMAN
Why do you think this is ...?

Marlowe enters and stands out of sight. He listens.

GREENE (OS)
Because he is Caesar.

TILLERMAN (OS)
So, you believe Venus, a God, has
earthly concerns that he is Caesar?

Greene looks confused --

GREENE
Of course ...

TILLERMAN
And you say Ovid, in his telling,
agrees with Venus's earthly
concerns.

GREENE
Yes ...?

TILLERMAN
Do you answer or question ...?

Greene hesitates.

MARLOWE (OS)
I say, Nay!

Everyone turns to see Marlowe saunter through the room,
putting on his gown. He drops into an empty seat.

Marlowe winks at his friend, ROBERT CECIL (20). Cecil nods
and smiles.

TILLERMAN
Thank you for joining us, Mr.
Marlowe.

MARLOWE
I thought I must if a proposition
of Ovid's writings is being
attempted.

Murmurs erupts among the Young Men.

TILLERMAN
You believe your fellow students
incapable of putting forth a right
argument?

MARLOWE

In time, but school ends for
holiday in a week.

Some Young Men grumble, but Cecil and others chuckle.

GREENE

Professor, obviously Mr. Marlowe's
absence from class has clouded
his ability to ...

MARLOWE

Sir, my ability to see what is
clear to anyone who knows Ovid,
only requires one have presence
of mind.

Young Men laugh aloud. Frustrated, Greene glares at Marlowe --

GREENE

Tell me Sir ...

The Young Men look at Greene.

GREENE (CONT'D)

You say Ovid disagrees with the
actions of Venus to intervene?

The Young Men turn to Marlowe.

MARLOWE

Tell me, Sir ... can one agree or
disagree with a hen's act to
shroud her brood?

Greene shakes his head --

GREENE

I see, as usual, Mr. Marlowe,
your contentious "Nay" was but a
guise in want of a true response.

MARLOWE

But, Sir, my response is true in
the question I've asked.

Tillerman smiles, inconspicuously.

GREENE

Your question has no place. A
hen's nature dictates her action.
One can not agree or disagree.

Greene looks among his friends --

GREENE (CONT'D)

The question itself is absurd ...

Greene's companions murmur in agreement --

MARLOWE

My point exactly, Sir ...

Marlowe's friends smile.

MARLOWE (CONT'D)

It is Ovid's nature to be true in the telling, whether he agrees or disagrees with Venus's actions. He, nor I, presume to know the actions of a God. The question itself is folly ...

The Young Men's eyes widen, as they look toward Tillerman.

TILLERMAN

Mr. Marlowe, you object to me asking the question ...?

MARLOWE

Sir, I say "Nay" not to the asking ...

He gleams at Greene --

MARLOWE (CONT'D)

...but to anyone's dim-witted attempt to answer.

The students laugh and applaud Marlowe.

The chapel bells peal, signaling the end of the class.

TILLERMAN

All right, gentlemen. Class is ended.

The students rise and Cecil joins Marlowe, congratulating him. He is an attractive man, but a slight turn in his back resembles a hump.

CECIL

One day that wit of yours will be your demise.

MARLOWE

But not today, Sir. Not today.

They laugh as Greene and his companions glare.

Tillerman stands at the door to his private room at the front of the class. He interrupts the joviality --

TILLERMAN
Except you, Mr. Marlowe ...

The Young Men go silent and look at Marlowe.

TILLERMAN (CONT'D)
I will see you in my room.

Marlowe's smile disappears. Across the room, Greene grins.

Cecil pats Marlowe on the back --

CECIL
The best to you Mr. Marlowe.

He and the other Young Men parade out of the Classroom. Marlowe stands alone.

INT. PROFESSOR TILLERMAN'S ROOM - DAY

Marlowe enters and looks around the small room. He hears movement from the pantry.

TILLERMAN (OS)
Have a seat, Mr. Marlowe.

Marlowe sits in front of the cluttered desk. Tillerman enters carrying a tray with tea. He sits near the fireplace.

TILLERMAN (CONT'D)
No ... here, Mr. Marlowe.

Marlowe joins him. Tillerman pours. He lights his pipe and stares incredulously at Marlowe. Marlowe sits silently.

TILLERMAN (CONT'D)
Nothing to say, Mr. Marlowe?

MARLOWE
No, Sir.

TILLERMAN
You were so vehement in class,
with an audience, and now, nothing?

MARLOWE
Yes, Sir ... I mean ... no, Sir.

TILLERMAN
You have won the day again from
Mr. Greene.

MARLOWE

It was not my intent ...

TILLERMAN

Oh yes it was.

Marlowe smiles.

TILLERMAN (CONT'D)

But, Sir, there are times one must give less wit and more forethought.

MARLOWE

Yes, Sir.

TILLERMAN

Mr. Marlowe you are extremely talented. Your writings have a clarity some men strive for, yet never achieve.

MARLOWE

I did not ask for it.

TILLERMAN

Yet it is yours for good or ill. And one day it will demand you make a choice. I advise you, choose well.

MARLOWE

I have other duties ...

TILLERMAN

Your other duties, whatever they may be, are not the concern of this University, only your studies.

MARLOWE

Yes, Sir.

TILLERMAN

Do you wish to finish next year?

MARLOWE

Yes, Sir.

TILLERMAN

Then you must take care to complete your studies.

MARLOWE

Yes, Sir.

Tillerman goes to his desk and looks for something.

TILLERMAN

A letter came for a Mr ... Kit Marley.

Marlowe looks at Tillerman curiously --

TILLERMAN (CONT'D)

I don't seem to recall the gentleman.

MARLOWE

I know him. He's quiet in class.

Tillerman stares incredulously at Marlowe.

TILLERMAN

I hope not too quiet, lest he forgets why he's here.

MARLOWE

Yes, Sir.

Tillerman gives Marlowe the letter. Marlowe reads the name, W. Shakspere.

EXT. CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY GROUNDS - LATER

Marlowe walks across the grounds reading the letter.

SHAKSPERE (VO)

Dear Mr. Marley. I hope my letter finds you well. I have taken leave to write you with no expectation of a reply. I wish to thank you for what I believe to be something from one of my dreams that I oft have of the world being turned up side down, from which I cannot wake.

Marlowe gives a thoughtful look.

SHAKSPERE (VO)

The time we spent in the woods talking together was most memorable. There is so much more I wish to share with you, and I hope there is an opportunity in the future for us to continue our newfound friendship. I do not presume anything, Sir, beyond my place, but I will from this day, consider you my friend. I send you my best regards, W. Shakspere.

Marlowe tucks the letter into his pocket and smiles.

SHAKSPERE (VO)

Post Script, I have taken your suggestion to write more of my words. I will show them to you when next we meet.

Marlowe playfully runs across the campus.

INT. PRIVY COUNCIL CHAMBER - DAY - TWO WEEKS LATER

FRANCIS WALSINGHAM (50) enters the great Privy Council Chamber, followed by Marlowe. Marlowe looks around the elaborate room in awe. There are several doors leading into the chamber. Above a large ornate door is the Royal Crest.

WALSINGHAM

I received a satisfactory report from Mr. Poley of your performance in Warwickshire.

Marlowe gives a surprised look. Suddenly, the ornate door opens. Lord Burghley enters carrying several documents. He's ten years younger, but still an austere gentleman. Marlowe bows --

MARLOWE

My Lord ...

Burghley joins Walsingham at the table. Marlowe watches as the two men confer. Walsingham pushes a document across the table. Marlowe sees the Queen's seal.

BURGHLEY

You are now commissioned in the Queen's service with wages due your position.

Marlowe stares at the document. He looks at the two men confused --

MARLOWE

It was my understanding a commission would be granted after my studies ...

WALSINGHAM

Do you question the Queen's command?

MARLOWE

No, Sir.

WALSINGHAM

You should be honored this charge
comes to you. Men have given their
lives in Her Majesty's service.

Walsingham stands.

MARLOWE

Yes, Sir. I'm honored, but ...

BURGHLEY

Walsingham, Marlowe is correct.
That was our agreement.

Burghley turns to Marlowe --

BURGHLEY (CONT'D)

Marlowe this would not be asked
if it was not pressing.

MARLOWE

My Lord?

BURGHLEY

Do you know of Lord Edward De Vere?

MARLOWE

The Earl of Oxford?

BURGHLEY

Yes.

MARLOWE

Is he not in the Tower under the
Queen's order?

WALSINGHAM

School gossip is like that at
Court, full of chatter and little
truth.

BURGHLEY

He is ordered to remain at his
estate in Middlesex.

WALSINGHAM

It is his sympathy for the
Catholic's cause that plagues us.

BURGHLEY

The man can no longer be trusted,
and his position threatens Her
Majesty.

WALSINGHAM

The man must be dispatched quickly
and quietly.

Marlowe eyes widen as he looks at the two men with
disbelief --

MARLOWE

You mean ...?

BURGHLEY

Yes.

MARLOWE

What is his crime?

WALSINGHAM

His crime? His crime is his
betrayal to all who love Her
Majesty!

Burghley lifts his hand to quiet Walsingham --

BURGHLEY

Marlowe, we need you to do this
to protect Her Majesty ...

Surprised --

MARLOWE

Me?

WALSINGHAM

He is a schoolboy. He has no
stomach for this fight.

Marlowe looks away, concerned.

MARLOWE

Sir ... give me time to think ...

WALSINGHAM

Boy, while you think, others plot
the Queen's demise.

(to Burghley)

Is this, in whom you put so much
faith?

After a few moments, Marlowe looks at Burghley --

MARLOWE

I will do as you ask, Sir.

BURGHLEY

I knew your heart was right for
this ...

Burghley nods to Marlowe.

BURGHLEY (CONT'D)

I leave you in, Sir Francis's
charge. He will instruct you.

Burghley gets up and walks toward the door.

MARLOWE

Lord Burghley ...

He bows.

MARLOWE (CONT'D)

I hope to serve Her Majesty well.

BURGHLEY

I'm sure you will, my son.

Burghley leaves.

WALSINGHAM

Now to the task ...

Walsingham takes two letters from the table.

WALSINGHAM (CONT'D)

This letter ...

Marlowe stares after Burghley --

WALSINGHAM (CONT'D)

Are you with me?

Marlowe turns to Walsingham.

MARLOWE

Yes, Sir. I'm with you.

WALSINGHAM

This letter will introduce you to
Oxford as Lord Burghley's man to
whom he entrusted a letter from
the Queen ...

Walsingham hands Marlowe the letter --

WALSINGHAM (CONT'D)

This letter is from the Queen ...

He hands him the second letter. Marlowe stares at it and takes it carefully. He places the letters into his satchel.

WALSINGHAM (CONT'D)

And this is your task ...

Walsingham unwraps a old, thick cloth to reveal a small, black vial --

WALSINGHAM (CONT'D)

It is quick and without mercy.

Marlowe takes it with care. He wraps the cloth and places it in his satchel.

WALSINGHAM (CONT'D)

And now, you must carry this with you always ...

Walsingham unwraps a beautiful laced cloth to reveal a sheathed dagger --

WALSINGHAM (CONT'D)

This is for your enemy, if you get entangled ... or for yourself, if you are ensnared.

Marlowe takes and examines the dagger noticing it's beautiful pearly handle with an inlaid red rose. He tucks it in his belt. Walsingham gives him an agreeing nod.

EXT. THE OXFORD ESTATE IN MIDDLESEX - NIGHT - A DAY LATER

A dark castle sits in the middle of a heavily wooded estate. Men on horseback, carrying torches patrol the grounds. Dark clouds cover the half moon.

INT. THE OXFORD ESTATE - NIGHT

Marlowe stands in a grand library. The dark room is lit by candles throughout. EDWARD DE VERE, 17TH EARL OF OXFORD (40) reads the two letters by the fireplace. His servant SMITHERS, a rough looking man, waits by the door.

DE VERE

Lord Burghley speaks highly of you.

MARLOWE

Yes, My Lord.

DE VERE

Do you know the contents of this letter from the Queen?

Surprised --

MARLOWE

No, My Lord.

DE VERE

She wishes me well and asks my
advice on matters of State.

De Vere smiles.

DE VERE (CONT'D)

This means I will soon be allowed
to return to Court.

Marlowe lowers his eyes.

De Vere steps to his desk and places the letters among the
other documents that cover it.

DE VERE (CONT'D)

You will be made comfortable for
the night, while I compose my
reply to Her Majesty.

Marlowe's eyes widen.

MARLOWE

I was not informed ...

De Vere stares suspiciously at Marlowe.

DE VERE

Lord Burghley says I should keep
you in my charge until my reply
is ready.

MARLOWE

I am at your service, My Lord.

DE VERE

Good. Smithers, prepare a room
for Mr. Marlowe. He will sup with
me tonight.

SMITHERS

Yes, My Lord.

DE VERE

Tell the boy to put his horse in
the stables.

SMITHERS

Yes, My Lord.

Smithers leaves. Marlowe follows.

DE VERE
No ... stay ... we will talk. Smithers,
bring brandy.

SMITHERS (OS)
Yes, My Lord.

DE VERE
So, tell me of your studies on
the Cam.

MARLOWE
I complete my bachelors next year.

DE VERE
And what of your writings?

Marlowe looks at De Vere surprised.

MARLOWE
Sir ...?

DE VERE
Are you not Christopher Marlowe,
the poet?

MARLOWE
How do you know of me?

DE VERE
One craves any word when forced
to live in exile, even from one's
University.

De Vere stares at a portrait over the fireplace of his father, the Sixteenth Earl of Oxford. The man is dressed in a princely manner. His hand rests on the hilt of his sword.

Smithers enters carrying a silver carafe and two goblets. He pours the brandy.

SMITHERS
My Lord, Cook wishes you to
approve the new scullery.

DE VERE
Damn! Why must I be bothered by
such things?

SMITHERS
My Lord's own instructions were
that all new servants ...

DE VERE
Don't tell me what I instructed.
I know my own mind. Go!

Marlowe looks sympathetically at Smithers, as the man leaves hastily.

DE VERE (CONT'D)
Excuse me. I must deal with this
matter ...

De Vere walks toward the door --

DE VERE (CONT'D)
I must take care, spies and
assassins you know?

Marlowe nods.

DE VERE (CONT'D)
When I return, we will drink and
talk.

De Vere leaves.

Marlowe looks around until his eyes fall on the goblets. He stares at the door as he moseys toward the table. He pulls out the vial, and steadying his hand, pours the liquid into one goblet and takes the other.

He nervously takes a long drink. After a few moments --

DE VERE (OS) (CONT'D)
I will deal with other matters in
the morning. Let me have the night
in peace.

De Vere enters the room. Marlowe looks away.

DE VERE (CONT'D)
All right, Sir, where was our
conversation?

Marlowe forces himself to watch De Vere pick up the goblet.

DE VERE (CONT'D)
Ah, yes ... Marlowe the poet.

Marlowe watches silently as De Vere takes a drink from the goblet.

MARLOWE
My work is not much ...

DE VERE
Do not be modest.

MARLOWE
My Lord?

DE VERE
Come, come, are you not translating
Lucan's Pharsalia?

MARLOWE
Yes ...

DE VERE
And, what of your work on Ovid's
Elegies?

De Vere steps to the desk and picks up a parchment.

MARLOWE
My Lord, how did you come by this?

DE VERE
My dear, Sir, you will be
surprised what I've come by.

Marlowe stumbles backwards and stares at De Vere fearfully.

DE VERE (CONT'D)
I've been reading something from
your translations of Lucan.

De Vere reads from the parchment --

DE VERE (CONT'D)
Rome thy citizens are near some
plague: what mischief shall ensue?
Shall towns be swallowed? Shall
the thickened air, become
intemperate? Shall the earth be
barren?

Marlowe's vision suddenly goes out of focus. He grabs his head.

De Vere glares at Marlowe --

DE VERE (CONT'D)
Shall water be congealed and
turned to ice? O gods what death
prepare ye?

Marlowe drops his goblet and collapses to the floor.

INT. THE OXFORD ESTATE - LATER

Marlowe regains consciousness. He sits in a chair near the fireplace. Looking around, he sees Smithers standing near him.

SMITHERS

My Lord ...

De Vere sits at his desk.

DE VERE

Ah ... the young man wakes.

MARLOWE

Am I poisoned?

DE VERE

No, I believe you fainted.

Marlowe straightens himself in the chair.

DE VERE (CONT'D)

Or, do you speak of the poison meant for me?

De Vere holds up the vial. Marlowe reaches for his dagger.

DE VERE (CONT'D)

Looking for this ...?

De Vere holds up the dagger. He studies it.

DE VERE (CONT'D)

My father wore this with such pride.

De Vere again looks at the portrait. Marlowe follows his gaze, and he recognizes on the waist of the Sixteenth Earl, the same pearl handled dagger. Marlowe glares at De Vere.

MARLOWE

Was this all an examination of my conviction?

DE VERE

Every man's heart must be tested.

MARLOWE

The letters and the poison were all a pretense?

DE VERE

Remember this above all, nothing is as it seems.

De Vere nods to Smithers. Smithers leaves, closing the door.

MARLOWE

And, does My Lord find me wanting?

DE VERE

I find you well enough for the tasks Walsingham has for you, and I will report as such.

Marlowe stares at De Vere's strange expression.

MARLOWE

But ...?

DE VERE

I have a commission for your writing.

MARLOWE

I am commissioned to Her Majesty's service.

DE VERE

Yes, but there is more than Queen and Country.

MARLOWE

Do you speak against Her Majesty, Sir?

DE VERE

Nay. Elizabeth is the true sovereign of England, and I will use whatever means to keep it so, but I also serve a Greater Cause.

MARLOWE

What is greater than the welfare of the Queen and her realm?

DE VERE

It is your writing that matters to me.

MARLOWE

Sir, you jest?

DE VERE

Your work has a presence of mind like no other I have read.

De Vere walks to the shelves containing bound books and mounds of scrolls.

DE VERE (CONT'D)
 What do you see here?

De Vere points to his shelves.

MARLOWE
 Is this a new test? I see books.

DE VERE
 Stories Mr. Marlowe. Man's
 insatiable attempt to discover
 his true nature. I, myself have
 written ...

De Vere points to the papers on his desk.

DE VERE (CONT'D)
 Searching for ..., something ...

Marlowe watches suspiciously as De Vere steps toward him
 with the dagger.

DE VERE (CONT'D)
 But here ...

He touches Marlowe's chest with the handle of the dagger.

DE VERE (CONT'D)
 ... lies that, which is true. A
 country, few men dare to journey.

De Vere hands Marlowe the dagger.

DE VERE (CONT'D)
 In your verses, you dare. You
 have discovered that place.

MARLOWE
 My Lord, my words are only words.

DE VERE
 And with no intent, you write
 true ...

De Vere laughs --

DE VERE (CONT'D)
 Your gift, Sir, is your call ...

MARLOWE
 Another has said the same.

De Vere nod --

DE VERE

Tillerman.

Marlowe looks at him incredulously.

DE VERE (CONT'D)

We were schoolmates at Cambridge.

Marlowe sheaths the dagger.

MARLOWE

And what do I do with it?

DE VERE

Ah, there's the rub. Whether to follow one's call.

De Vere looks at Marlowe intensely.

DE VERE (CONT'D)

But, if you choose it, that will be your Greatest Story.

Marlowe looks at him incredulously.

MARLOWE

For good or ill ...

De Vere nods.

EXT. ENGLISH CATHOLIC COLLEGE AT RHEIMS - EVENING

The cloister of the seminary is riddled with trees and sparse of color. In the main building, shadows appear behind every turn and down long corridors. Jesuits in woolen cassocks, with their hoods pulled up, walk in prayer, and on patrol.

INT. LOWER LEVEL OF COLLEGE BUILDING - EVENING

Chains lock the doors along a dark corridor. At the end of the corridor, the light of a flame emanates from a room.

Suddenly --

TORTURED MAN (OS)

O God, save me ...

INT. THE DARK CHAMBER - EVENING

Torches light a dark damp room. RICHARD BAINES (20'S), lies naked and bound to a table. Instruments of torture lie in the coals of a hearth nearby. He's barely conscious.

Sebastian and another Jesuit, ROAN, wearing hooded cassocks, stand over Baines. Roan touches the tip of a hot instrument to Baines thigh. Baines yells --

BAINES
God ... release me.

Roan stops. Sebastian leans over Baines face. --

SEBASTIAN
The truth is your only release.

Baines stares fearfully up at Sebastian. He breaths heavily --

BAINES
Please ... I told you all Walsingham
instructed me.

Sebastian signals and Roan applies the instrument again.

BAINES (CONT'D)
Ah ... I know nothing more.

Baines passes out.

ROAN
He has told all he knows.

Sebastian nods his head satisfactorily. He ladles water from a pail and throws it in Baines's face, reviving him.

SEBASTIAN
I believe you, my son. Do you
wish to make your confession?

Baines looks up at Sebastian --

BAINES
Yes, Father ...

Sebastian makes the sign of the cross over him --

SEBASTIAN
In the name of the Father, the
Son and the Holy Ghost ...

Sebastian listens as Baines whispers.

Roan collects his instruments and methodically cleans each, returning them to a leather pouch.

Sebastian gives Baines absolution. He steps toward the door.

ROAN

What are we to do?

SEBASTIAN

I return to England to meet our brother Gilbert.

ROAN

What of him?

He indicates Baines. Sebastian looks at Baines.

SEBASTIAN

Dispose of him.

Sebastian crosses himself and turns.

Roan takes a black-handled dagger from his cassock.

Baines stares in fear --

BAINES

(to Sebastian)

Father please. I am your servant ...

SEBASTIAN

No Brother, God's servants do not abandon his church.

BAINES

I can assist you in your cause.
Please ...?

Roan lifts his dagger.

SEBASTIAN

Wait ...

Roan looks at Sebastian incredulously. Sebastian stares at Baines for a moment --

SEBASTIAN (CONT'D)

Return him to his cell.

ROAN

But ..., he poisoned our water.

SEBASTIAN

He might still serve our purpose.

Sebastian leaves. Roan glares at Baines as he puts away his dagger.

INT. PRIVY COUNCIL - DAY

Lord Burghley and Walsingham sit at the council table. Open letters are on the table. Marlowe stands across the room staring at them.

BURGHLEY
De Vere speaks highly of you.

WALSINGHAM
You should heed his counsel.

Marlowe nods.

MARLOWE
Am I to return to Cambridge?

WALSINGHAM
No. You return to Warwickshire.

MARLOWE
Warwickshire, My Lord? But, my studies?

WALSINGHAM
Do you question me ...?

Marlowe bows obediently.

MARLOWE
I am at your service.

There's a knock on the door.

BURGHLEY
Enter.

Poley enters the room.

WALSINGHAM
Ah, Mr. Poley.

Poley bows.

He glances at Marlowe

POLEY
Mr. Marlowe.

Poley nods.

MARLOWE
Mr. Poley.

Marlowe nods.

WALSINGHAM

Mr. Marlowe you will return with
Mr. Poley and join our troop of
players traveling through
Warwickshire.

MARLOWE

Players, My Lord?

WALSINGHAM

Some of our most skilled men.

POLEY

Like most, you see only fools,
but each man is a master with a
sword and serves at Her Majesty's
pleasure.

MARLOWE

What am I to do?

WALSINGHAM

Watch and learn, and when called
on, do what is asked of you.

BURGHLEY

(to Poley)

Send word of what you discover
through Sir Thomas.

POLEY

My Lord, we will leave within the
week.

Poley bows and leaves.

BURGHLEY

God's speed, Mr. Marlowe.

MARLOWE

My Lord ...

Marlowe bows and follows Poley out.

BURGHLEY

Will he do?

Walsingham nods reassuringly --

WALSINGHAM

He will do well.

BURGHLEY

What of Baines?

WALSINGHAM

I fear Mr. Baines is lost to us.

Burghley nods disappointingly.

INT. CORRIDORS OF WHITEHALL - CONTINUOUS

Poley waits in the dark corridor. As Marlowe passes, Poley grabs him and thrusts him against the wall.

POLEY(VO)

I warn you, schoolboy, if you
jeopardize this mission, I will
kill you myself and tell them of
your heroic death!

Marlowe tries not to show fear. Poley releases him and walks away.

INT. MARLOWE'S ROOM IN LONDON - NIGHT - LATER

At his desk, a single candle is lit. Marlowe takes paper and quill and writes --

MARLOWE(VO)

My Dear Mr. Shakspere, I was very
happy to receive your last letter.
Forgive the delay in my response.
Circumstances have kept me
occupied this past month.

Marlowe lifts the letter and reads what he has written --

MARLOWE(VO) (CONT'D)

Our correspondence this past year
has brought me much joy, and I
truly look forward to seeing you
again. I'm to return to
Warwickshire. I will send word
upon my arrival. Your dear friend,
Kit.

He folds the letter and seals it with hot wax.

EXT. PLAYERS CAMP - DAY - WEEKS LATER

At a large clearing outside Stratford-on-Avon, a small stage is being erected while PLAYERS practice their skills.

A KNIFE THROWER juggles four daggers, then throws each at a target on a tree with perfect accuracy.

A YOUNG PLAYER climbs a rope, then quickly tightropes another, stretched between two trees, twenty feet high.

NICHOLAS SKERES (30) and ROGER SMITH (20), two players, duel with wooden swords, but with perfect dueling form.

Poley, Marlowe, and OTHER PLAYERS watch from the side.

POLEY
(to Skeres)
Here, give him a go.

Poley hands Marlowe a wooden sword. Marlowe takes it with a smirk.

MARLOWE
I've had lessons.

POLEY
Let's see.

Skeres presents himself to Marlowe with a comical flare to the amusement of the PLAYERS. Marlowe presents himself with a small bow. The two men duel, and quickly, Skeres realizes Marlowe is a superior swordsman.

Poley's conceals his amazement. After a minute, and several attacks and counterattacks of Marlowe, he sees Skeres will be bested. Poley signals Smith to push a branch behind Marlowe. Seeing it, Skeres struggles to drive Marlowe backwards, until Marlowe stumbles over the branch.

Marlowe stands angrily. He goes after Smith. Poley and ANOTHER PLAYER grab Marlowe and hold him until he calms down from his unforeseen rage.

Skeres steps over and puts out his sword hand, as a gesture of friendship. The Poley release Marlowe and watches his response.

Marlowe stares at Skeres hard. With his left hand, he takes the sword from his right and extends it. The two men grab each other's wrist, and smile.

Everyone laughs, as Smith also shakes hands with Marlowe and takes his wooden sword.

Poley calls for Marlowe to walk with him.

POLEY (CONT'D)
You have learned two lessons today.

Marlowe looks at Poley.

POLEY (CONT'D)
 What we do here is not a
 gentleman's enterprise.

Marlowe nods.

POLEY (CONT'D)
 Those whom we fight are treacherous
 and devious men.

MARLOWE
 And the second?

POLEY
 The men here are your cohorts.

Poley stops and stares at Marlowe --

POLEY (CONT'D)
 We must trust each other to fight
 side by side.

Marlowe nods affirmatively.

EXT. PLAYERS CAMP - EVENING

Marlowe, on the stage, recites his translations of Ovid's
 Elegy for a small audience.

MARLOWE
 What makes my bed seem hard,
 seeing it is soft? Or why slips
 down the coverlet so oft?

Will Shakspere arrives by foot.

MARLOWE (OS) (CONT'D)
 Although the nights be long, I
 sleep not though my sides are
 sore with tumbling to and fro.

He walks toward the stage.

Marlowe sees Shakspere and steps to the edge of the stage.

MARLOWE (CONT'D)
 Were Love the cause, it's like I
 should descry him, Or lies he
 close, and shoots where none can
 spy him?

Poley standing to the side, follows Marlowe's gaze. After a
 moment, he recognizes Shakspere.

MARLOWE (OS) (CONT'D)
 T'was so, he stroke me with a
 slender dart, 'Tis cruel love
 turmoils my captive heart.

Shakspere watches Marlowe with a smile.

MARLOWE (OS) (CONT'D)
 Yielding or striving do we give
 him might, Let's yield, a burden
 easily borne is light.

Poley signals Skeres.

MARLOWE (OS) (CONT'D)
 I saw a brandished fire increase
 in strength, Which being not
 shaken, I saw it die at length.

Marlowe sees Skeres walking toward Poley.

MARLOWE (CONT'D)
 Young oxen newly yoked are beaten
 more, Than oxen which have drawn
 the plough before.

Poley and Skeres walk around the audience and stand behind
 Shakspere.

MARLOWE (OS) (CONT'D)
 And rough jades' mouths with
 stubborn bits are torn, But
 managed horses' heads are lightly
 borne,

Shakspere turns and sees Poley and Skeres.

MARLOWE (OS) (CONT'D)
 Unwilling lovers, love doth more
 torment, Than such as in their
 bondage feel content.

He tries to walk away.

MARLOWE (CONT'D)
 Lo, I confess, I'm thy captive I,
 And hold my conquered hands for
 thee to tie.

Marlowe watches as they grab Shakspere, but he continues his
 recitation.

MARLOWE (OS) (CONT'D)
 What needs thou war, I sue to
 thee for grace, With arms to
 conquer armless men is base, Yoke
 Venus' doves, put myrtle on thy
 hair, Vulcan will give thee
 chariots rich and fair.

They drag Shakspere to the end of the camp.

MARLOWE (CONT'D)
 The people thee applauding thou
 shalt stand, Guiding the harmless
 pigeons with thy hand.

Skeres holds Shakspere on the ground with his knee on his chest.

Poley leans over him. He squeezes his jaw --

POLEY
 Who sent you here?

SHAKSPERE
 (through pinched jaw)
 No one ...

POLEY
 Yes they have, and you will tell.

MARLOWE
 Poley!

Marlowe runs over --

MARLOWE (CONT'D)
 Mr. Shakspere is my friend.

POLEY
 You know him?

MARLOWE
 Yes.

Poley charges toward Marlowe, threateningly --

SKERES
 Poley!

Poley stops.

POLEY
 This man was at Edstone.

MARLOWE

I know.

POLEY

The men there are in league with
our enemies.

SHAKSPERE

Not I, Sir, ...

Skeres slaps Shakspere's head --

POLEY

You bring a traitor among us?

Marlowe looks toward Shakspere, fondly.

MARLOWE

He is no traitor.

Poley glares at Marlowe's expression then looks toward
Shakspere, suspiciously --

POLEY

Is he why you did not meet Lucy
in Edstone?

Marlowe looks at Poley, embarrassed.

POLEY (CONT'D)

The poet is bitten by his own words.

MARLOWE

Do not be a fool. He is but a
friend.

POLEY

You are the fool.

Marlowe is silent. Poley walks back to Skeres --

POLEY (CONT'D)

Release him.

Skeres looks at Poley --

SKERES

What?

POLEY

Do as I say. Release him.

Poley walks toward the stage --

POLEY (CONT'D)

He is a friend of Mr. Marley.

Skeres releases Shakspere and follows Poley. Suddenly, there's a large cheer and applauds from the audience.

Marlowe steps to Shakspere --

MARLOWE

Are you injured?

SHAKSPERE

Fine companions you have.

MARLOWE

They are suspicious of strangers.

SHAKSPERE

An odd quality for players.

Marlowe smiles at Shakspere as he brushes the dirt from his back.

SHAKSPERE (CONT'D)

I received your message, should I not have come?

MARLOWE

I wished for you to come.

Skeres follows Poley --

SKERES

What are you doing?

Poley glares back at Marlowe and Shakspere.

POLEY

Our friend thinks this is a schoolboy's game.

SKERES

This is not good.

POLEY

Walsingham wants him taught. Well, this will be his third lesson.

Poley walks away --

POLEY (CONT'D)

Keep an eye on him.

SKERES

Which one?

POLEY

Both. I'm sure you will find them
adjoined.

Poley storms away. Skeres glares at Marlowe and Shakspere
behaving, flirtatiously.

EXT. A MEADOW OUTSIDE STRATFORD - AFTERNOON - WEEKS LATER

It's midday and the sun is high in the cloudless sky.

Marlowe and Shakspere ride the gray mare through a beautiful
meadow of wildflowers.

Marlowe's in front and Shakspere holds him tightly from
behind. The horse jumps a fence and the two young men laugh,
joyfully.

In the distance, a shepherd tends his flock of sheep.

EXT. A MEADOW OUTSIDE STRATFORD - AFTERNOON - LATER

Along a river's bank, Marlowe and Shakspere lie in the shadow
of a large tree. Shakspere rests his head across Marlowe's
stomach. They listen to the sounds of the summer's day.

MARLOWE

If only it could be this way always.

SHAKSPERE

If this be a midsummer's dream,
may I never wake from it.

MARLOWE

Aye. I too wish to remain asleep
here with you forever.

After a moment --

MARLOWE (CONT'D)

Our time together has given me
great joy.

SHAKSPERE

With the sky and the wind and the
unending light, hearken to the
sound of birds in flight. Give
leave the weight of my burdensome
yoke, and await a joyful dawn's
rise out of night's dark cloak.

After a few moments of silence --

MARLOWE
Leave this place and come with me.

SHAKSPERE
I cannot.

MARLOWE
Join the players. We can go to
London together.

Shakspere sits up.

SHAKSPERE
I cannot.

MARLOWE
You do not have feelings for the
woman you are wedded to.

Shakspere looks away.

SHAKSPERE
She is with another child.

Marlowe looks disappointed.

SHAKSPERE (CONT'D)
And, I cannot abandon my daughter,
Susanna. She is my joy.

Marlowe sees the delight fill his face.

MARLOWE
Let Hathaway take care of them.

Shakspere glares at Marlowe.

SHAKSPERE
Ask her father, another man, to
do my duty?

MARLOWE
You will be bound to a woman you
do not love ...

SHAKSPERE
So be it. I will not abandon them.

Marlowe stands upset.

MARLOWE

You are not William Shakspere.
You are nothing but ... "William
Hathaway", a man bound by duty,
not by love.

SHAKSPERE

Then "William Hathaway" I am, for
I will not abandon my duty.

MARLOWE

I beg you Will, choose another
course ...

SHAKSPERE

Choose you ...?

MARLOWE

Yes!

Shakspere looks at Marlowe disappointingly.

SHAKSPERE

I cannot ...

MARLOWE

Then go ... be a fool and deny
yourself.

SHAKSPERE

No, I deny only you.

Marlowe strikes him. Shakspere stands and strikes Marlowe
back. Marlowe grabs him and they wrestle to the ground
scaring the horse. Shakspere subdues Marlowe hitting him in
the face. Marlowe pulls his dagger and puts it to Shakspere's
throat.

SHAKSPERE (CONT'D)

Do you mean to kill me ...?

Shakspere gets off him. Marlowe stares at Shakspere enraged.

SHAKSPERE (CONT'D)

Or, give cause to have me taken
to the Tower, too?

Marlowe looks surprised.

SHAKSPERE (CONT'D)

Deny you are an agent of the
Queen's.

Marlowe looks away shamefully.

MARLOWE

I did not mean to ...

Shakspere walks away. Marlowe fumbles to put the dagger away.

MARLOWE (CONT'D)

Will, stop!

Shakspere mounts the horse and rides away.

MARLOWE (CONT'D)

Come back!

Shakspere leaves Marlowe alone in the meadow.

EXT. STRATFORD INN - DUSK

Poley and Skeres dismount. A stable boy takes their horses.

SKERES

Gifford has a room for the evening.

POLEY

Follow me in.

Poley steps to a side window and peers inside.

SKERES

Is he inside?

He sees GILBERT GIFFORD (30) sitting with two other men. One is JOHN BALLARD (35).

POLEY

Yes, but he's with two others.

The third turns around, and Poley sees it's Sebastian. He jumps back from the window, unseen.

POLEY (CONT'D)

It's the Jesuit, Sebastian.

SKERES

The one who abandoned Somerville?

POLEY

I cannot compromise myself with Gifford. He has information we need.

SKERES

He's expecting you.

POLEY

Watch them ... Find out what you can.

Poley gets his horse.

POLEY (CONT'D)
Sir Thomas must get word to
Walsingham.

Poley rides north. Skeres goes inside.

INT. THE ESTATE OF SIR THOMAS LUCY - NIGHT

Poley waits in the Library. A portrait of Elizabeth hangs prominently on the wall.

Sir Thomas enters, carrying a riding crop --

LUCY
Forgive me. I had to deal with a
scoundrel my men caught poaching
my deer.

Behind him, two men hold a man, bloody from a beating.

LUCY (CONT'D)
He refuses to give his name. Do
you know him?

Lucy signals the men to show his face. It's Shakspere.

Poley recognizes him. Shakspere stares at Poley. After a moment --

POLEY
No.

Lucy signals them to take him away. The servant closes the door.

LUCY
I will get the truth from him.

Lucy steps next to the fireplace.

LUCY (CONT'D)
My man tells me you have word of
the Jesuit, Sebastian.

POLEY
He has returned to the shire ...

LUCY
This confirms Walsingham's
suspicion of a new plot against
the Queen.

POLEY

Do we capture the Jesuit?

LUCY

No. We are to learn of his
conspirators, and their plan.

Suddenly, there is a commotion in the hall.

LUCY (CONT'D)

Walsingham wants evidence of
Mary's duplicity, else the Queen
will not act.

Lucy opens the door.

LUCY (CONT'D)

What is it?

A Manservant steps up.

MANSERVANT

The man has escaped. He was not
as injured as he pretended. We
chased him, but he had a horse
waiting.

LUCY

Fools.
(to Poley)
Do you believe such incompetence?

Poley shakes his head looking at the men.

LUCY (CONT'D)

Get to the horses. Find him.

The Manservant scurries off.

LUCY (CONT'D)

Return to Stratford. Learn what
you can.

Lucy follows his men.

EXT. THE PLAYER CAMPSITE - EVENING

A player performs as a jester. Marlowe watches from the side.

On the road, Sebastian comes upon the Player's Camp. He
hitches his horse and makes his way toward the stage. He
watches the performance from the back of the audience.

The JESTER'S buffoonery makes Sebastian smile. He looks around and suddenly sees Marlowe standing off stage.

Sebastian's demeanor hardens. He stares at Marlowe intensely. The Jester finishes. Smith steps out --

SMITH

For your pleasure, Mr. Kit Marley.

Marlowe takes the stage for his recitation.

MARLOWE

Ah, fair Zenocrate! -- divine
Zenocrate! Fair is too foul an
epithet for thee, --

Sebastian steps back into the shadows, he watches Marlowe's every gesture on stage.

MARLOWE (CONT'D)

That in thy passion for thy
country's love ...

Suddenly, Sebastian's eyes widen with recognition --

SEBASTIAN

(to himself)

The Young Courier.

MARLOWE (OS)

And fear to see thy kingly
father's harm, With hair
dishevell'd wip'st thy watery
cheeks;

Sebastian steps behind a tree and looks at the other players. Recognizing no one else, he glares at Marlowe.

Across the camp, Skeres watches Sebastian.

INT. EDSTONE INN - EVENING

The Innkeeper's wife cleans. The common room is empty. She hears a sound and takes the candle to the door.

INNKEEPER'S WIFE

Who is there?

SHAKSPERE

(faintly)

Will ...

She opens the door, and Shakspere falls to her feet. She sees bloody welts on his back through his torn shirt.

EXT. THE PLAYER CAMPSITE - EVENING - LATER

Marlowe goes to where the horses are corralled. Smith follows him.

Marlowe saddles a horse.

SMITH
Where are you going?

MARLOWE
To retrieve my horse.

SMITH
I must tell the others where you
have gone ...?

MARLOWE
Do not tell Poley anything.

Marlowe mounts the horse, but Smith grabs its reins.

MARLOWE (CONT'D)
Release it.

SMITH
Tell me, or you do not leave.

Smith holds tight.

MARLOWE
I go to Edstone.

Smith releases the horse, and Marlowe rides away.

Beyond the camp, Sebastian watches. He follows Marlowe.

After a few moments, Skeres rides into the camp.

SKERES
(to Smith)
Where does Marley ride?

SMITH
He rides to Edstone.

SKERES
Tell Poley upon his return, the
Jesuit, Sebastian, follows Marlowe
to Edstone, and I follow him.

Skeres gallops away.

INT. EDSTONE INN - LATER

The Innkeeper pours water in the kettle in the open hearth in the kitchen. Shakspere lies on a small bed in the corner. With a basin of hot water, the Innkeeper's Wife cleans his wounds. Shakspere squirms from the pain.

INNKEEPER'S WIFE

Lie still.

INNKEEPER

You know what they will do if they find him here?

INNKEEPER'S WIFE

Who do you fear more, Lucy or the Catholic upstarts?

INNKEEPER

Both! We now tend an empty inn because our patrons have been frightened away.

He paces the room nervously.

INNKEEPER (CONT'D)

Do you want to end up in the Tower like Somerville and the others? Or, worse, at the hands of the rebels?

Suddenly, the Innkeeper looks toward the door and sees a man in the shadow.

INNKEEPER (CONT'D)

Who is there?

His wife looks --

INNKEEPER'S WIFE

Will ...

Shakspere looks up and sees Marlowe step out of the shadow.

INNKEEPER

If it isn't the devil himself.

MARLOWE

What happened?

INNKEEPER

Lucy had at him.

Marlowe looks at his back. The Innkeeper's wife takes the basin of bloody water away.

MARLOWE

Why?

SHAKSPERE

I tried to do my duty for my family ...

INNKEEPER

He was poaching Lucy's deer.

Shakspere looks away from Marlowe.

SHAKSPERE

I was a fool.

Marlowe smiles.

The Innkeeper's wife brings fresh hot water. Marlowe takes it.

EXT. EDSTONE INN - NIGHT

Sebastian creeps from the woods. He looks through a window. He sees Marlowe and Shakspere inside with the Innkeeper and his wife. After a few moments, he leaves.

INT. EDSTONE INN - CONTINUING

The Innkeeper's Wife rips clothes for bandages. Sitting on the bed, Marlowe bandages Shakspere's wounds, wrapping bandages around his torso.

MARLOWE

(to the Innkeeper)

I will stay with him ...

The Innkeeper and his wife look to Shakspere. He nods.

Marlowe watches as they retreat to a back room behind the kitchen.

Shakspere looks at Marlowe, but Marlowe avoids his gaze.

MARLOWE (CONT'D)

What can I say?

SHAKSPERE

You, too, were a fool.

MARLOWE

I feared losing you.

Shakspere smiles. Marlowe looks at him.

SHAKSPERE
When I was under Lucy's whip, and
believed it was the end, it was
your face I clung to.

MARLOWE
Can you forgive me?

After a moment --

SHAKSPERE
I will come with you to London,
if you still want me.

Marlowe smiles.

MARLOWE
What of your duty?

SHAKSPERE
I will send any wages to Anna.
But, you are right, I must follow
my heart.

Marlowe stares at him, ashamed.

MARLOWE
You were right ... I am the Queen's
agent ...

Shakspere puts his hand over Marlowe's mouth.

SHAKSPERE
And I have worked for the Catholic
rebels.

Marlowe looks surprised.

SHAKSPERE (CONT'D)
Not for their cause, but for their
crowns. But, now you are my only
devotion.

MARLOWE
And, you are mine.

Marlowe smiles and embraces him. Shakspere grimaces --

SHAKSPERE
My back ...

Marlowe releases him --

MARLOWE

Sorry ...

Shakspere smiles at him. After a moment --

MARLOWE (CONT'D)

I must tell you, my true name is
Christopher Marlowe.

Shakspere shrugs --

SHAKSPERE

What's in a name?

Shakspeare looks deeply into Marlowe's eyes. Suddenly --

SHAKSPERE

But, never again call me, "William
Hathaway."

Marlowe laughs. Shakespeare kisses him. Marlowe passionately returns the kiss, trying to avoid touching his back.

INT. EDSTONE INN - LATER

The candle on the table has melted. The fire in the hearth is dim. Shadows dance on the walls around the room.

Shakspere sleeps on the bed. Marlowe sleeps in a chair next to him.

There's a noise outside. Marlowe wakes. He gets up and goes outside.

EXT. EDSTONE INN - MOMENTS LATER

Marlowe looks around and sees nothing. He walks toward the privy near the stable. He hears a sound and stops.

Suddenly, Skeres steps out in front of him.

MARLOWE

What are you doing here?

Poley grabs him from behind. He binds and gags him. Skeres binds his legs.

POLEY

Get the horses.

Poley holds Marlowe. Skeres retrieves Marlowe's gray mare, and the horse Marlowe took from the camp.

The Stable Boy watches out of sight in a shadowed corner of the stable, unseen.

Poley lifts Marlowe across his shoulder. They walk into the woods to where their horses are tied.

Poley puts Marlowe on the ground. He places his knee on his chest, while Skeres prepares all the horses to travel.

Poley looks down to see Marlowe's enraged expression.

POLEY (CONT'D)
Sebastian, the Jesuit followed
you here.

Marlowe calms down and stares at Poley.

POLEY (CONT'D)
You have endangered what we do.

Poley removes the gag.

MARLOWE
You threatened my demise, if I
did. Let me stay and take my
chances.

Poley shakes his head sorrowfully --

POLEY
I cannot allow you to stay ...

Marlowe sees the concern in Poley's eyes.

MARLOWE
You must warn Will ...

POLEY
He is left to his fate.

MARLOWE
(yelling)
Will!

Poley quickly covers Marlowe's mouth with his hand. Marlowe bites him, but Poley endures the pain then replaces the gag.

POLEY
You will ride back, or I will tie
you over a horse.

Marlowe shakes his head angrily and struggles to get free.

Suddenly, they hear the clamor of riders on the road.

SKERES
 (quietly)
 Riders!

Marlowe struggles, but Poley lies atop him to keep him quiet.

Skeres watches as three riders approach.

Sebastian, Gifford and Ballard ride up to the inn.

GIFFORD
 Why have you brought us here?

SEBASTIAN
 To take care of our enemies.

They dismount and go inside the inn.

Skeres watches. Poley holds Marlowe down, but he continues to struggle.

After several minutes, the three men come out with the Innkeeper, his wife and Shakspere, restrained.

SEBASTIAN (CONT'D)
 John, get rope from the stable.

Ballard smiles sinisterly. Sebastian turns to Shakspere.

SEBASTIAN (CONT'D)
 Where is the man, Marley? He was here tonight.

INNKEEPER
 He left in the night.

Sebastian steps closer to Shakspere.

SEBASTIAN
 Do you remember me?

SHAKSPERE
 Yes.

SEBASTIAN
 Marley follows the heretic Queen, Elizabeth, who has abandoned God's church.

SHAKSPERE
 The church preys on the fear of men.

Enraged, Sebastian knocks him to the ground --

SEBASTIAN

Blasphemer!

Sebastian drops to his knees beside Shakspere with a pastoral demeanor.

SEBASTIAN (CONT'D)

I, too, was abandoned by those
who were supposed to love me.

He strokes Shakspere's face.

SEBASTIAN (CONT'D)

My people left me to fend for
myself in this Godless world, but
I was saved by the Church.

Sebastian extends his hand to him --

SEBASTIAN (CONT'D)

Let me help you back to God's
Church ...

Shakspere glares --

SHAKSPERE

I don't want you, or your church.
Unlike you, I am loved.

Sebastian's rage returns --

SEBASTIAN

Those who aid the heretics must
pay for their betrayal.

Ballard returns with three long lengths of rope, each with a tide noose.

Sebastian signals Ballard, who tosses the ropes over a branch of a large tree. Gilbert watches nervously --

GIFFORD

You cannot do this ...

SEBASTIAN

They are traitors of the church.

Sebastian ties a noose in one of the ropes.

INNKEEPER

We have done nothing.

Sebastian puts the noose around the Innkeeper's neck.

SEBASTIAN

Then you will die for the sins
you have done.

Sebastian and Ballard grab the end of the Innkeepers rope
and pull.

INNKEEPER

Please God, No!

The Innkeeper tries to run, but he's jerked off his feet.
His yelling stops. He jerks around, choking.

Ballard ties off the end of the rope to the tree.

The Innkeeper's wife cries out. Sebastian steps to her and
puts the second noosed rope around her neck. He glares at
Shakspere --

SEBASTIAN

(to Shakspere)

Where is the man, Marley?

Shakspere stares the Innkeeper's wife in the eyes. She stares
back in fear, crying.

SHAKSPERE

I do not know. He left as I slept.

SEBASTIAN

Just like a coward, to leave his
companions behind.

Sebastian and Ballard pull the Innkeeper's wife off her feet.
She screams.

SHAKSPERE

No!

Her scream is silenced as death comes quickly.

In the woods, Skeres looks on in horror. Poley holds Marlowe
down firmly, and Marlowe can only listen as he struggles in
vain.

Gifford watches, but is too frightened to do anything to
stop it.

Sebastian puts the last noosed rope around Shakspere's neck.
Ballard grabs the rope.

SEBASTIAN

Fear not, your friend, Mr. Marley,
will join you very soon.

They pull the rope, pulling Shakspere off his feet.

In the woods, Marlowe listens as tears fall from his eyes, but Shakspere never cries out.

Gifford stares at the three bodies hanging from the tree. The three men mount their horses.

SEBASTIAN (CONT'D)

This will be a warning to all who
oppose our cause.

They gallop away.

Skeres follows them through the woods on foot.

The night becomes eerily silent, as the sound of the swinging rope creaks on the branch.

Marlowe stares up at Poley with an impotent stare. After a few moments, Skeres returns.

SKERES

They are gone.

Poley releases Marlowe and cuts his bindings. Marlowe stands and slowly turns to see the three bodies hanging from the tree.

MARLOWE

He knew all of me. I told him
everything ...

Marlowe glares at Poley.

MARLOWE (CONT'D)

... and he took it to his death.

Marlowe walks toward the inn.

SKERES

Shall I stop him?

POLEY

No.

Marlowe runs to the tree. Crying, he grabs Shakspere's legs in a vain attempt to save him. Poley and Skeres follow.

Marlowe kneels below Shakspere's swinging body, crying. He grips the handle of his dagger.

MARLOWE

(to himself)
Shall I join you ...?

Poley steps up behind Marlowe and touches his shoulder.

Marlowe pulls away.

MARLOWE (CONT'D)

You should have left me to die
with him.

POLEY

I could not.

Poley cuts the rope and lower Shakspere's body. Marlowe leans over the it and caresses Shakespere's face.

MARLOWE

They have awakened me, but you
dream on my beloved.

Poley and Skeres carry each, the bodies of the Innkeeper and Innkeeper's Wife, into the inn.

Marlowe struggles to lift Shakspere's body. He carries it into the inn.

POLEY

What has happened here must never
be known.

EXT. ROAD IN EDSTONE - LATER

Poley, Skeres and Marlowe sit on their horse watching as a fire begins to grow inside the inn. Poley and Skeres turn to ride away. Poley sees the Stable Boy standing in the shadow, on the roadside. He rides over and reaches out his hand. The boy grabs hold of him, and Poley lifts him to his horse's back.

Marlowe stares at the inn as flames engulf the inn. In his hand, he holds Shakspere's book of writings --

MARLOWE

I promise ... I will avenge thee.

He rides away as the flame's light parts the night's sky.

INT. MARLOWE'S ROOM AT CAMBRIDGE - NIGHT - DAYS LATER

A single candle is lit on his desk. Marlowe packs his belongings into a large bag. He places Shakspere's book inside.

There's a knock. Cecil opens the door and peaks inside --

CECIL

Kit, is that you?

He sees Marlowe sitting on his bed, staring at the floor. He sees the travel bag next to him.

CECIL (CONT'D)

Where are you going?

MARLOWE

I travel abroad. There is something I must do.

CECIL

Are you just leaving without word to anyone? What about your studies?

MARLOWE

Cecil, my studies mean nothing anymore.

Marlowe looks at Cecil --

MARLOWE (CONT'D)

I am lost ...

Marlowe stands and walks to his desk. He blows out the candle then walks toward the door. Cecil watches as Marlowe leaves.

INT. PROFESSOR TILLERMAN'S ROOM - NIGHT

Tillerman stares out his window. He watches as Marlowe crosses the courtyard and mounts his horse. He stares sorrowfully as Marlowe rides away into the night.

INT. A PUB IN VLISSINGEN, THE NETHERLANDS - DUSK - THREE MONTHS LATER

Marlowe dressed as an adventurer, sits with a GROUP OF DRUNKEN MEN.

MARLOWE

Innkeeper! More ale for my friends.

The men cheer Marlowe.

TWO SUSPICIOUS MEN enter and move to the back of the inn. They are PHILIP SIDNEY (30) and a younger ROBERT DEVEREUX (19). The Innkeeper places two fists of mugs on the table.

The men grab them up.

MARLOWE (CONT'D)

Let us raise our drink to the English Queen ...

He stops and looks around.

MARLOWE (CONT'D)

By God, this is not England. To whom shall we drink?

FIRST DRUNKEN MAN

To Philip of Spain ...?

MARLOWE

Not with ale I buy. He may rule this land, but he does not rule my purse.

The Men laugh.

Marlowe glances at the two men. All eyes are on him, waiting.

SECOND DRUNKEN MAN

Leicester, our champion?

MARLOWE

He's no king ..., but God knows he wants to be.

The men laugh. Sidney and Devereux look on irate. After a moment, Marlowe conjures --

MARLOWE (CONT'D)

(lyrically)

Let us drink to the King of the vine, Plumpy Bacchus, with red eyes ...!

Marlowe grabs a woman server. She sits on his lap, laughing.

MARLOWE (CONT'D)

In your breast our cares be drown'd, With your grapes our hairs be crown'd and fill our cup till the world go round!

Marlowe stands and sings again. Men join him --

MARLOWE (CONT'D)

Let us drink to the King of the vine, Plumpy Bacchus, with red eyes! In your breast our cares be drown'd, With your grapes our hairs be crown'd and fill our cup till the world go round!

While singing, Marlowe nods the two men toward the back door. They leave inconspicuously.

THE CROWD

Let us drink to the King of the
vine, Plumpy Bacchus, with red
eyes! In your breast our cares be
drown'd, With your grapes our
hairs be crown'd and fill our cup
till the world go round!

EXT. A PUB IN VLISSINGEN - NIGHT

Sydney and Devereux wait behind the inn. Marlowe comes out carrying his mug of ale.

SIDNEY

You think it wise to make such a
ruckus.

MARLOWE

There is no better place to hide
than among drunkards.

DEVEREUX

You were to meet us weeks ago.

MARLOWE

I've been busy with my own affairs.

Devereux laughs --

DEVEREUX

I hear you seek a Jesuit? Do you
mean to convert ...?

Marlowe looks at Devereux angrily. He grabs the hilt of his sword.

SIDNEY

Enough. You have the information?

MARLOWE

You have my crowns?

Sidney reaches under his cloak. Marlowe pulls his rapier.

MARLOWE (CONT'D)

Take care you draw only your purse.

Marlowe pulls back Sidney's cloak with his blade, revealing the hilt of his blade and his purse. He sees a pistol tucked in his belt.

MARLOWE (CONT'D)

I heard such weapons were carried
by cowards.

DEVEREUX

How dare you. Do you know who I am?

MARLOWE

No, who are you ...?

DEVEREUX

I am ...

Interrupting --

SIDNEY

We are the Earl of Leicester's men.

He pulls out his purse. Marlowe glares at Devereux.

MARLOWE

I speak true of any man who
conceals such a weapon.

Devereux reaches for his rapier. Marlowe quickly places his
blade to Devereux's throat.

SIDNEY

Gentlemen ...!

Marlowe takes a breath and his anger abates.

MARLOWE

But, have we come to fight or trade?

Devereux releases his rapier. Marlowe cautiously sheathes
his blade.

SIDNEY

What word do you have for My Lord?

Marlowe pulls out a map.

MARLOWE

Tell your Lord to take heed.
Philips' General, Parma, is
amassing his men ...

Marlowe opens the map on a nearby barrel.

MARLOWE (CONT'D)

(pointing to the map)
They are building here ... here ...
and here.

SIDNEY

For what purpose?

MARLOWE

To march them to the coast.

DEVEREUX

Why move men to the coast to fight
with the channel at their backs?

Marlowe scoffs --

MARLOWE

He moves to the coast, then to
England.

SIDNEY

By what means?

MARLOWE

Spanish ships.

DEVEREUX

Where did you get this information?

MARLOWE

Where matters not, its accuracy
is what you must be concerned about.

Marlowe folds the map.

MARLOWE (CONT'D)

Leicester must stop Parma's advance.

Sidney and Devereux look at him suspiciously.

MARLOWE (CONT'D)

Now, my pay ...

DEVEREUX

Why should we pay for such absurd
information?

MARLOWE

Because gentlemen honor their word.

Marlowe puts his hand on the hilt of his rapier.

Sidney tosses Marlowe his purse. Marlowe feels its weight.
He smiles and winks at Devereux. Devereux turns his back to
Marlowe and walks away, disgusted.

SIDNEY

What will you do with such wages?

Marlowe turns. Sidney watches as he trudges away into the
dark night.

MONTAGE :

EXT. A ROAD IN THE LOW-COUNTRIES - DAY

Marlowe arrives at the Jesuit Monastery.

SUPER: ST. JOHN'S JESUIT MONASTERY

He dismounts and rings the bell. After a long moment, an old Jesuit opens the door. Marlowe questions him. The Jesuit shakes his head no and closes the door.

EXT. ROAD IN EASTERN FRANCE - MORNING

SUPER: HOLY TRINITY JESUIT MONASTERY

Marlowe exits the gate of the monastery as two Jesuits watch him mount his horse and ride away.

EXT. ROAD IN FRANCE - DAY

SUPER: ST. MARY'S JESUIT MONASTERY

Marlowe rides up to a field where a group of Jesuits are working. In the distance, Marlowe sees the monastery. He questions one of the Jesuits, who shakes his head no. Marlowe continues on the road.

END MONTAGE :

EXT. ROAD IN RHEIMS, FRANCE - DAY

SUPER: ENGLISH CATHOLIC COLLEGE, RHEIMS.

A Frenchman rides toward the monastery. The Jesuit, Roan, comes out to greet him. It's Marlowe.

Both speak in French --

ROAN

Welcome My Lord.

MARLOWE

Good morning, Father. I'm Monsieur Le Deux. I seek a tutor for my nephew, Jacques.

ROAN

For what studies?

MARLOWE

I was told a Father Sebastian was an excellent tutor in Latin and mathematics. May I speak with him?

ROAN
I'm sorry, Father Sebastian is no longer here.

Marlowe looks around the grounds.

MARLOWE
I was informed he was ...

Suddenly, Marlowe sees another Jesuit staring at him. It's Baines.

MARLOWE (CONT'D)
Do you know where Father Sebastian can be found?

Roan looks at Marlowe, suspiciously --

ROAN
I may be able to get word to him. Where can you be contacted?

Marlowe quickly gathers his reins.

MARLOWE
I travel to Paris today. I will call again ...

He turns his horse and quickly rides from the grounds.

INT. ENGLISH CATHOLIC COLLEGE CORRIDOR - DAY

Roan enters the corridor. Sebastian waits.

ROAN
Did you recognize him?

SEBASTIAN
It was that interloper, Marley.

ROAN
He recognized Baines.

Sebastian looks out toward Baines.

SEBASTIAN
Bring Baines to me.

EXT. VLISSINGEN INN - NIGHT

On the dark streets of Vlissingen, outside the inn, a drunken man urinates at the side of the building.

INT. VLISSINGEN INN - NIGHT

The inn is a squalor. The large room is dark and dilapidated. Water runs down the walls, and the odor of dry rot and mildew fills the room.

Men from all walks of life, scoundrels and ruffians, adventurers and gentlemen sit throughout the room. SEVERAL WANTON WOMEN tease and taunt the men sexually.

HAZEL (17) sits on a GENTLEMAN'S lap. As she laughs with him, a DIRTY LITTLE BOY under the table cuts his purse. Players entertain the men with music, magic and jest.

An inebriated Marlowe, with longer hair, sits at a back table between, IRENE (19), a beautiful young woman and FREDERICK (18), a handsome young man. Two other women, DIANA (20's) and MARGUERITE (20's) are together at the table. All are properly dressed in fine evening wear.

Diana and Marguerite laugh playfully as Marlowe kisses Irene and Frederick in turn. He smacks his lips as if tasting something delectable after each kiss. He repeats the gesture again, judging who is the better kisser.

Marlowe and his friend's sexual antics draw the envious attention of two adventurers, JACK AND CHARLES.

Marlowe stands and leads Irene and Frederick toward the stairs. Diana and Marguerite grab the bottles of wine and follow. As they pass, Jack grabs Irene. Marlowe turns.

JACK
 (to Marlowe and
 Frederick)
 You two hens go and leave these
 wenches with us roosters.

Irene struggles to get away from Jack. Charles grabs Diana, but she breaks a bottle of wine over his head and runs behind Marlowe.

Jack laughs at his companion's mishap as he holds the struggling Irene tight. He pushes his hand up her thigh.

JACK (CONT'D)
 You are not going anywhere ...

MARLOWE
 (hi-toned English
 speech)
 Sir, you have insulted me and my
 friends. I demand satisfaction.

Frederick snickers at Marlowe's affected manner.

JACK

I will give you satisfaction ...

As he stands and reaches for his sword, Irene falls to the floor. Marlowe, in a gentlemanly manner, reaches out his hand and helps her to her feet --

MARLOWE

Of course, you will allow a gentleman one last night of pleasure before he dies?

Jack stares at Marlowe dumbfounded. He glances back at his companion, who's still recovering from the broken bottle.

Not waiting for an answer, Marlowe turns --

MARLOWE (CONT'D)

Thank you, Sir. I will see you in the morning.

Marlowe and the others climb the stairs arm-in-arm as the two men watch in disbelief.

JACK

I will see you at dawn ...

EXT. A FIELD BEHIND THE VLISSINGEN INN - DAWN

The morning fog covers the field. A frustrated Jack waits for Marlowe with sword in hand.

Marlowe takes off his cloak and places it around Frederick, who's shivering in the morning air. Frederick's open blouse reveals his hairy chest. Marlowe kisses him at the displeasure of Jack and Charles.

Irene cries for Marlowe. He kisses her tenderly. He takes a swig of wine from Diana's bottle and kisses her and Marguerite.

Straightening his clothing, Marlowe faces Jack. --

MARLOWE

En garde!

Jack attacks Marlowe with several quick steps. With a big smile, Marlowe parries each attack. Jack pursues Marlowe gleefully until Marlowe thrusts and suddenly stops. The glee drains from Jack's face.

He looks down to see Marlowe's blade has pierced his chest. Marlowe pulls his sword and Jack drops to the ground.

Charles stares incredulously as Marlowe walks pass him back toward the inn --

MARLOWE (CONT'D)

Let's return to bed.

Marlowe's friends parade pass the INNKEEPER who waits with TWO MEN holding spades. They remove the body.

EXT. A FIELD IN VLISSINGEN - DAWN - DAYS LATER

Marlowe duels a FRENCH GENTLEMAN who fights him vigorously. Marlowe slays the man, then steps over to the French Gentleman's woman who looks on in shock.

MARLOWE

Now, for the kiss you promised me.

He kisses her and walks away. Marlowe's friend's follow.

EXT. A FIELD IN VLISSINGEN - DAWN - WEEKS LATER

Marlowe duels again. This time with a LARGE GENTLEMAN who can barely hold his sword, but who is determined to slash Marlowe.

Marlowe toys with the man, shamefully. He gains the advantage behind the man and thrusts his rapier into the man's buttock. The man topples over into the mud, face first. Marlowe and his friends laugh and walk away.

EXT. FIELD IN VLISSINGEN - DAWN - A MONTH LATER

A more roguish looking Marlowe finds himself in a duel with an Englishman, ROBERT CATESBY (20'S), who is well versed with a sword and gives Marlowe a challenge.

Catesby's companions, all with drinks in hand, cheer on their friend --

CATESBY FRIENDS

Good show ... Robert ... Hurrah ...!

After a long volley, Catesby cuts Marlowe's arm, drawing first blood, but Marlowe refuses to end the fight.

Enraged, he attacks Catesby, backing him into his friends. The other men jeer Marlowe's ungentlemanly behavior.

A SECOND GENTLEMAN draws his sword. Marlowe turns and quickly vanquishes him.

A THIRD GENTLEMAN draws his sword and Marlowe silences him too. He turns back to Catesby.

Catesby sees Marlowe's maddened expression. He drops his sword.

CATESBY
Sir, you are a rogue.

Marlowe's face fills with rage. He lunges forward at him.

Marlowe's friends yell out --

MARLOWE'S FRIENDS
Kit! No!

At the last moment, Marlowe changes his aim, piercing Catesby's blouse under his arm, missing his chest.

Catesby stares at Marlowe, defiantly.

Marlowe turns shamefully. He takes his cloak and walks away, alone.

INT. VLISSINGEN INN ROOM - NIGHT - A WEEK LATER

Marlowe's friends are gone. He is in bed with Hazel from the inn.

He turns over, wide eyed, and gets out of bed. He shuffles to the desk in the room and lights a single candle. There are piles of hand written papers tied with twine on the desk. Next to them is Shakspeare's book.

He clears a space and takes out a new sheet. He writes with his ink stained hand. After a few moments, Hazel wakes --

HAZEL
Come back to bed.

Marlowe ignores her.

HAZEL (CONT'D)
Every night you leave me. What do you write all night?

Hazel gets out of bed, disgusted. She grabs her clothes.

HAZEL (CONT'D)
There are men who will not leave my bed ...

She grabs Marlowe's purse and empties out a few coins.

HAZEL (CONT'D)
Men with crowns.

She storms out of the room. Oblivious to her tantrum, he continues to write feverishly.

EXT. ROAD IN ANTWERP - NIGHT - MONTHS LATER

SUPER: ANTWERP

Marlowe arrives at the great trade city.

INT. ANTWERP INN - NIGHT

Marlowe enters the inn and looks around. He looks disheveled. Long, matted hair covers his head and face. His youth and innocence are gone. He looks around and recognizes a Gentleman sitting in the back of the inn. Marlowe strolls to the table.

MARLOWE

I see you have escaped your
English jailer?

The man looks up. It's De Vere.

DE VERE

She allows me out, briefly.

MARLOWE

On her business of course?

DE VERE

Indeed.

Marlowe sits.

DE VERE (CONT'D)

And, from what hole have you
crawled?

MARLOWE

The hole of my discontent, for
this winter has been long.

DE VERE

You still pursue the Jesuit?

Marlowe looks disappointed.

MARLOWE

I lost all trail of him this autumn.

Marlowe calls to a server --

MARLOWE (CONT'D)

Wine!

The woman brings wine to the table.

MARLOWE (CONT'D)
But, every snake raises its head,
eventually.

DE VERE
Have you heard the word from
Leicester's men?

MARLOWE
Not since last spring. I believe
they camp in the north.

De Vere looks at him, suspiciously.

DE VERE
Is it true you pulled your blade
on the Earl of Essex?

MARLOWE
I did not know he was an Earl.

DE VERE
Would knowing have given you pause?

Marlowe smiles --

DE VERE (CONT'D)
Take care, Devereux is Leicester's
ward and the Queen's favorite.

MARLOWE
You did not come to the Low
Country to talk of my antics.

DE VERE
I go to meet a General who also
fights against Spain.

MARLOWE
Where are you to meet this General?

DE VERE
Paris. Will you travel with me?

MARLOWE
Do you need my protection?

De Vere smiles --

DE VERE
No, your company. We can talk. I
read the play you sent.

Marlowe pulls several bounded papers from his satchel.

MARLOWE
Here is my next one.

De Vere examines the work and smiles.

MARLOWE (CONT'D)
When do we leave?

DE VERE
Tonight.

De Vere raises his mug and Marlowe raises his. They drink.

EXT. PARIS INN - NIGHT - WEEKS LATER

Marlowe and De Vere arrive on a street riddled with desperate characters. The light from a large inn bathes the dark road. They dismount. TWO BOYS take their horses.

INT. PARIS INN - NIGHT

People from all walk of Parisian life fill the large common room of the grand Paris inn. The fine decor of the room gives it an appearance of civility and gentility.

A man plays a tune on a harpsichord. Patrons fill smaller sitting rooms off the large room. De Vere and Marlowe enter. Marlowe scans the room. He scrutinizes every man, especially the ones who are armed.

De Vere seems unconcerned as he walks to an empty table. Marlowe follows. A waiter comes to the table --

WAITER
(in French)
Good evening gentlemen. May I
serve you?

Marlowe looks at De Vere. De Vere waits for a moment --

DE VERE
(in English)
Bring us your best wine.

Men at nearby tables glance at them, suspiciously. Marlowe notices them. De Vere glares at the waiter --

DE VERE (CONT'D)
Do you not understand English?

WAITER
Oui, Monsieur ..., I mean ..., yes, Sir.

The waiter scurries away.

TWO FRENCH MEN sitting directly across the room stares irately at De Vere and Marlowe. The First Man whispers into his companion's ear. The Second Man smiles, fiendishly.

MARLOWE

Are you trying to get us killed?

DE VERE

You are the reputed swordsman ready for the fight. Well, here you might get your chance.

Inconspicuously, Marlowe puts his hand on the hilt of his rapier.

De Vere finally looks around the room and notices THREE MEN sitting at a back table.

Marlowe notices De Vere's gaze. He observes the Three Men dressed in foreign garb. Two are Italian. They seem to be in conversation with their hands.

The Third Man's hood covers his face. Marlowe tries to glimpse under his hood when suddenly, the man looks up at him, revealing his dark features.

MARLOWE

(whispering to De Vere)

A Moor!

THE MOOR stares at Marlowe.

DE VERE

He is the General we've come to meet.

Marlowe looks at De Vere, incredulously. De Vere nods to The Moor. He nods back.

DE VERE (CONT'D)

And, I would not call him a Moor to his face, or you will have more than the French to fear.

Marlowe hesitantly looks back. Suddenly, a man's voice reverberates across the room. It's MONSIEUR NAPIER (30), one of the Frenchmen sitting directly across the room from Marlowe and De Vere --

NAPIER
(in French)
Who has invited the subjects of
the Protestant Queen to Paris today?

The Moor hides his face.

Neither Marlowe nor De Vere reacts. The waiter returns with wine and two goblets. Marlowe pours the wine as he shifts his weight, readying himself for a fight.

NAPIER (CONT'D)
(in French)
I see they come to Paris to drink
our wine.

Men murmur. De Vere lifts his drink in one hand and unstraps his sword with the other.

NAPIER (CONT'D)
(in French)
I guess they, too, cannot tolerate
the stench that emanates from her
Majesty's English church.

Some men laugh heartily, and others nervously.

Marlowe's eyes identify the men ready to fight from those ready to flee.

NAPIER (CONT'D)
(in accented English)
Pardon ... I suspect I must speak
in your gutter language for you
to understand me.

DE VERE
(in perfect French)
I'm sure the stench from the
English church cannot liken to
the stench of the bodies that
emanates from the River Seine and
fills the nostrils of godly men.

Suddenly, the room quiets. De Vere glares at Napier.

DE VERE (CONT'D)
(in French)
Frenchmen only know how to
massacre defenseless women and
children.

Napier stands, enraged.

NAPIER
 (in English)
 Monsieur, you will give me
 satisfaction?

DE VERE
 (in English)
 If I must ...

NAPIER
 Monsieur Laurent is my second.

LAURENT, the second man stands and nods to De Vere with a
 curious smirk.

DE VERE
 Mr. Marley is my second.

Marlowe stands and nods.

LAURENT
 (in English)
 Monsieur ...?

DE VERE
 Monsieur Bartholomew, at your
 service.

De Vere bows. Men look at De Vere astonished. Laurent looks
 around anxiously.

LAURENT
 Monsieur Bartholomew, Monsieur
 Napier will meet you at dawn in
 the clearing behind ...

De Vere interrupts --

DE VERE
 No! Monsieur Napier will meet me
 here ...! Now ...!

De Vere stands and snatches off his cloak. Marlowe gives him
 a look. He tosses Marlowe his cloak with a wink.

LAURENT
 No, Monsieur ...! That is not the
 way in France.

DE VERE
 As Monsieur Napier has so wittily
 made known ...,

De Vere quickly steps across the room toward Napier --

DE VERE (CONT'D)

... I am from England.

Napier steps back and takes off his cloak throwing it to Laurent. He pulls out his sword.

Marlowe notices under Napier's left arm a small leather courier's pouch.

Other men move out of the way. Marlowe drops De Vere's cloak on a chair and takes off his own. He watches Laurent and the other men for any attempt to ambush De Vere.

Napier continues to avoid De Vere, keeping furniture and men between them. De Vere pursues him.

NAPIER

(in English)

Monsieur ..., you are no gentleman.
I will not duel with a rogue.

Napier steps around a table. Frustrated, De Vere jumps on the table using the shoulder of a man standing nearby. De Vere points his sword at Napier --

DE VERE

An English rogue ...

De Vere attacks, and Napier parries. Their swords cross. The two men duel.

De Vere jumps off the table forcing Napier back. The men behind Napier scramble out of the way as the duelers go back and forth, thrusting and parrying, attacking and counterattacking. Both men seem evenly matched.

DE VERE (CONT'D)

You are good, Sir, ...

Marlowe stands ready with his hand on the hilt of his rapier. He glances at the Moor, who sits well out of the way of the fight.

The Two Italians look on astonished, but the Moor seems uninterested.

Marlowe turns back to the duel. De Vere and Napier work their way around the room driving the crowd ahead of them.

Several times, De Vere gives his opponent a mocking smile, which enrages Napier to attack foolishly. With each poor attack, Napier looks anguished as he works to regain his form and to keep De Vere at bay.

Suddenly, Napier thrusts at De Vere awkwardly and De Vere parries twice causing Napier to lose his balance.

DE VERE (CONT'D)

But, not good enough ...

Napier tries to recover.

Seeing Napier's defensive mistake, Marlowe pulls out his dagger and stands ready.

De Vere eye's intensify, and his face loses its whimsical expression. In one fluid motion, he takes two quick-steps back, straightens his arm and thrusts once forward, plunging his sword into Napier's chest.

A crimson color suddenly grows on Napier's white blouse. Napier stares at De Vere as his sword drops. De Vere pulls out his sword and steps back. Napier collapses to the floor.

Marlowe steps to De Vere's side holding his sword and dagger. The room is silent as everyone watches Napier die. After a moment, Laurent steps over with Napier's cloak and covers the body.

FRENCHMAN#1

(in French)

This is an outrage ...

FRENCHMAN#2

(in French)

An insult ...

Frenchmen become enraged and move to surround De Vere and Marlowe.

MARLOWE

You have a way out of this, right?

Suddenly, there is a small explosion from the rear of the room. Everyone turns. A small cloud of white smoke emanates from a corner.

Marlowe watches as The Moor stands. He towers over the men in the room. The Two Italians follow him toward the entrance. Men in their path quickly step aside.

THE MOOR

(in French)

My friends, and I will leave you gentlemen to your game of wit and death.

Marlowe stares at The Moor's stunning face. As he passes De Vere --

THE MOOR (CONT'D)
(in English)
An excellent demonstration.

DE VERE
I'm happy you were entertained.

THE MOOR
Give my regards to your Queen.

DE VERE
If I ever see her again.

De Vere looks around the room at the angry faces of the men ready to attack.

THE MOOR
Yes ..., if you do.

The Moor saunters toward the door. His men watch his back as they leave.

MARLOWE
Is that it ...? "Regards to your Queen ...?"

DE VERE
All is not as it seems ...

Marlowe looks at De Vere, incredulously. The Frenchmen move toward them. De Vere and Marlowe raise their weapons.

Suddenly, there are four loud explosions from different parts of the common room. Men yell in panic as the room quickly fills with a thick black smoke choking all who breaths it.

Marlowe spins around confused. De Vere pushes Marlowe --

DE VERE (CONT'D)
To the door.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE PARIS INN - NIGHT

Marlowe exits, coughing. After a few moments, De Vere follows with his kerchief tied over his nose and mouth. He's carrying their cloaks in one hand, and his dagger in the other. He tosses Marlowe's cloak to him --

DE VERE
You forgot this.

Marlowe watches as De Vere runs toward the road where The Moor and the Two Italians wait on horseback, holding Marlowe and De Vere's horses.

Angry Frenchmen emerge from the smoke-filled inn, coughing and confused.

DE VERE (CONT'D)

Do you wish to remain and fight?

Marlowe runs to follow De Vere. As they mount their horses, Marlowe notices De Vere carrying the dead man's leather courier pouch.

The group rides into the night.

EXT. THE MOOR'S TENT, OUTSIDE OF PARIS - NIGHT

The Moor's large tent is pitched in a clearing in the woods. Their horses are tied, and the Two Italians stand sentry. Again, they converse with their hands.

INT. THE MOOR'S TENT - NIGHT

A small fire and oil lamps illuminate the tent. An incense burns, filling the air with an strong exotic smell. The Moor sits with De Vere and Marlowe. The men have food and drink.

De Vere reads the documents from Napier's pouch.

MARLOWE

How did you know he was a courier?

DE VERE

I could see he was a man burdened
with a task larger than his wit ...

The Moor smiles.

MARLOWE

But, how did you know he would
challenge you?

From the entrance of the tent --

LAURENT

It was my task to incite him to
do so.

Laurent stands there.

Marlowe jumps to his feet and pulls his rapier.

LAURENT (CONT'D)

See how easy, I've incited you ...

DE VERE

Mr. Marlowe, May I introduce, Mr. Ingram Frizer, a countryman.

MARLOWE

You're English?

Marlowe cautiously relaxes and sheaths his blade.

FRIZER

If not, I'm in the wrong camp.

Frizer steps over and pours himself a drink. De Vere reads from a document --

DE VERE

This reports the capture of Babington, and the detail of their execution.

MARLOWE

I hope they suffered.

THE MOOR

You are very angry for a man who writes such beautiful words.

Marlowe turns to The Moor then to De Vere --

MARLOWE

You gave him my work?

DE VERE

I thought the General might enjoy your work.

The Moor reaches his long, curved-bladed dagger into a bowl of dates. Marlowe notices an inlaid rose on its handle.

THE MOOR

My people are the children of Elisha, The Queen, Dido. Your English story of her is most interesting.

MARLOWE

I'm happy you approve.

THE MOOR

I only comment on the manner of your telling ...

DE VERE
Marlowe ..., that was a compliment.

Marlowe turns to De Vere who smiles as he takes a drink.

MARLOWE
Are we here to talk of my writing
or the Spanish?

THE MOOR
Can we not do both?

DE VERE
A letter here from Allen to Philip
mentions ...

De Vere looks at Marlowe --

DE VERE (CONT'D)
... the Jesuit, Sebastian ...

Marlowe listens attentively.

DE VERE (CONT'D)
Sebastian names Poley, who he
believes to be an agent of the
Queen, Gifford who he says
betrayed them, and a young
interloper named Marley.

Frizer looks at Marlowe --

DE VERE (CONT'D)
He charges Philip and all men of
faith to dispatch these enemies
of the Church.

Frizer jests --

FRIZER
(to Marlowe)
Like the Queen, you too now have
a warrant of death on your head.

Marlowe glares at Frizer.

The Moor spreads a map --

THE MOOR
Philip's delay has held Cruz's
ships at Cadiz and La Coruña,
without provisions or proper men.
This will cause his ships to
remain through the winter.

DE VERE

If Drake moves on them in early
spring, he might catch them napping.

THE MOOR

Late winter might be wiser.
Parma's army will be on the move
by spring.

De Vere reads another Document from the pouch.

DE VERE

This letter confirms Parma is to
meet Cruz in April.

MARLOWE

I gave Leicester warning of
Parma's army. He should be
prepared to meet him.

De Vere and The Moor look at each other disappointingly.

DE VERE

Leicester met Parma with
insufficient men ...

MARLOWE

When was this ...?

DE VERE

Last Autumn.

THE MOOR

Leicester was beaten ...

DE VERE

Devereux did not convey your
warning to Leicester ...

MARLOWE

The fool!

THE MOOR

Tell him all ...

Marlowe looks at De Vere --

DE VERE

Devereux accuses you for their
defeat. He claims you did not
give a true report of Parma's
complement.

MARLOWE

And, he was believed?

DE VERE

By Leicester's men who lost their fellows ...

THE MOOR

But, not by those of us who know Leicester is no general.

DE VERE

With you as the culprit, Leicester saves his reputation with Elizabeth.

MARLOWE

I am surely damned.

DE VERE

It is fortunate you came upon me, and not the men Devereux sent to search you out.

MARLOWE

Does Lord Burghley believe ...?

DE VERE

Lord Burghley knows Devereux's treachery as does Walsingham.

THE MOOR

But, Devereux has Leicester's ear ...

DE VERE

... and Leicester's the Queen's ...

FRIZER

You are damned.

DE VERE

I must return to London.

MARLOWE

I shall go with you ...

DE VERE

No, Walsingham wishes you to remain here.

MARLOWE

I will not be kept silent.

DE VERE
 Defense of you at the Privy
 Council will be difficult.

MARLOWE
 I must clear my name.

DE VERE
 Important happenings at court
 will be interrupted with your
 presence.

FRIZER
 Yes, like the prosecution of a
 Scottish Queen.

Marlowe looks incredulously at De Vere.

MARLOWE
 Because of their political
 intrigue, I must remain absent
 and accused?

Marlowe looks around at the other men angrily.

MARLOWE (CONT'D)
 Is that why no Englishmen joined
 you for this fight, because of
 these charges against me?

FRIZER
 I am an Englishman ...

Marlowe ignores Frizer --

MARLOWE
 Is that why you asked ...

Marlowe looks at The Moor --

MARLOWE (CONT'D)
 ... this man, to fight with you?

The Moor laughs.

De Vere stares at Marlowe, scornfully.

DE VERE
 The General is a gallant friend,
 skilled for this fight, for which
 men here and abed in England have
 no stomach.

FRIZER
Gentlemen ..., I'm an Englishman
ready for the fight.

DE VERE
(to Frizer)
Quiet ...

After a few moments --

THE MOOR
Some stand for a cause greater
than country ...

The Moor stares intensely at Marlowe --

THE MOOR (CONT'D)
Will you stand with us?

Marlowe stares at The Moor.

EXT. THE PORTS AT CADIZ - NIGHT - MONTHS LATER

SUPER: THE PORTS AT CADIZ

Marlowe, dressed as a Spaniard, the Moor and the Two Italians
gallop away from the piers.

In the distance, the Spanish Armada is moored at the piers
and in the bay.

Several of the store houses on the piers are ablaze.

Men from the ships run toward the fires as flames light the
dark evening sky.

Suddenly, the exploding sounds of cannon fire are heard.
Several Spanish galleys are struck. From the dark sea,
English ships appear in the harbor firing on the Spanish ships.

Marlowe and The Moor stop to look back.

MARLOWE
Do them well Drake ...! Do them
well ...

They stare as rounds of cannon fire from the English ships
hit their mark.

THE MOOR
We must leave this road. It will
soon be filled with very angry
Spaniards.

The Moor and Marlowe turn their horses and gallop away as the Port of Cadiz goes up in flames.

EXT. BEACH AT SAGRES - EVENING

Longboats are lined on the beach to return Drake's men to their ships.

Marlowe stares at The Moor with admiration. The two men clasp forearms --

THE MOOR

When you write of me, be kind.

Marlowe smiles and nods. He walks towards the longboat.

The Two Italians step forward. Marlowe smiles and waves to the three companions he leaves behind on the beach.

EXT. PLYMOUTH DOCKS, ENGLAND - DAWN - MONTHS LATER

SUPER: WINTER, 1587

An English Corsair is moored at the pier. A SAILOR with a bundle over his shoulder makes his way down the gangplank and walks alone toward Plymouth.

A carriage rides up behind him and slows. A man speaks from inside --

MAN FROM CARRIAGE

Have you come to the end of your journey?

THE SAILOR

My journey ends at my death.

MAN FROM CARRIAGE

Take care that day has not come ...

The Sailor drops his bundle and throws back his cloak. It's Marlowe. His beard and mustache are trimmed and his hair is long and recedes.

He draws his rapier.

MARLOWE

If it ends today, you will surely join me.

The carriage door opens. Marlowe waits. Sir Robert Cecil steps out. Marlowe smiles and sheathes his sword. He bows. Cecil smiles and grabs Marlowe. The two men embrace.

INT. A PLYMOUTH INN - DAY

In a private room, Cecil listens as Marlowe recounts his adventures in the Low Country and Spain.

MARLOWE

And then we joined Drake and
landed at Sagres. The fortress's
walls held us back for three
nights, until it was realized,
its draw gate was made of wood.

Cecil watches as Marlowe animates his actions.

MARLOWE (CONT'D)

We each made our way, carrying
bundles of kindling, until a pile
was erected higher than the
tallest man. It was lit, and
burned all night. In the morning
the fortress was ours.

CECIL

You have traveled far from our
days at Cambridge.

Marlowe looks off --

MARLOWE

Cambridge was a life time ago.

Marlowe turns to Cecil --

MARLOWE (CONT'D)

So, who sent you, Lord Burghley
or Walsingham ...?

Cecil looks at Marlowe, incredulously.

CECIL

Both ...

MARLOWE

Surely, my presence cannot still
hinder their plans. The Scottish
Queen is dead.

CECIL

But, Philip still plots.

MARLOWE

Why is that cause for my exile?

CECIL
Devereux still harbors deep
animosity toward you.

MARLOWE
Are not my exploits this past
year of any significance?

CECIL
Drake's reports of you, make you
more of a threat to Devereux's
ambitions.

MARLOWE
So, I am sacrificed for the
ambitions of a fool?

CECIL
The world about the Queen is
complex. This is not one of your
plays.

Marlowe glares at him cynically --

MARLOWE
Yes, I could never write such
treacherous plots.

CECIL
Kit, you can not return until the
truth can pave your way.

MARLOWE
What is the truth?

CECIL
I beg of you ...

After a moment, Marlowe smirks --

MARLOWE
I promise, Christopher Marlowe
will not step foot in London ...

Cecil looks at Marlowe, suspiciously.

MONTAGE:

INT. A LONDON THEATER - DAY - WEEKS LATER

SUPER: *TAMBURLAINE*, LONDON, 1587

Actors portray the characters of Tamburlaine.

INT. A LONDON THEATER - DAY - WEEKS LATER

SUPER: *THE JEW OF MALTA*, LONDON, 1588

Actors portray the characters of *The Jew of Malta*.

INT. A LONDON THEATER - DAY - WEEKS LATER

SUPER: *THE TRAGIC HISTORY OF DR. FAUSTUS*, LONDON, 1589

Actors portray the characters of *The Tragic History of Dr. Faustus*.

"FAUST"

Away, you villain; what, dost
think I'm a horse-doctor?

Exit "HORSE-COURSER".

"FAUST" (CONT'D)

What art thou, Faustus, but a man
condemn'd to die? Thy fatal time
doth draw to final end; Despair
doth drive distrust unto my
thoughts:

Marlowe sits in the audience

"FAUST" (CONT'D)

Confound these passions with a
quiet sleep: Tush, Christ did
call the thief upon the cross;
Then rest thee, Faustus, quiet in
conceit.

END MONTAGE:

EXT. OUTSIDE A LONDON THEATER - NIGHT

Marlowe walks through the outer courtyard of the theater.
He's dressed as a gentleman. His hair is long and his
hairline recedes. He has a goatee and thin mustache. A
THEATER GENTLEMAN approaches him.

THEATER GENTLEMAN

Mr. Marlowe ...?

Marlowe continues to walk, ignoring the Gentleman.

THEATER GENTLEMAN (CONT'D)

(calling)
Christopher Marlowe.

The Gentleman approaches him.

THEATER GENTLEMAN (CONT'D)
Are you not Christopher Marlowe?

A crowd gathers.

MARLOWE
I'm not, Sir. My name is Mr.
Shakespeare.

Suddenly, a familiar voice comes from the crowd --

DE VERE (OS)
My dear William, I've been looking
for you.

Everyone turns to see De Vere approach.

DE VERE (CONT'D)
(to Marlowe)
William ..., is there a problem here?

Marlowe smiles and bows.

MARLOWE
My Lord, this gentleman has
mistaken me for someone else.

THEATER GENTLEMAN
My Lord, do you know ... this man?

DE VERE
Of course, He is William
Shakespeare.

Marlowe looks at De Vere.

DE VERE (CONT'D)
An actor, and a friend. Who do
you believe him to be?

THEATER GENTLEMAN
I thought him Christopher Marlowe.

DE VERE
The author of Dr. Faustus ...

THEATER GENTLEMAN
And a scoundrel, Sir, who caused
the death of Englishmen in battle
in the Low Country.

DE VERE
If that is true, why do you attend
his play?

The man acquiesces --

THEATER GENTLEMAN
Well ..., My Lord, good theater is
good theater.

The crowd chatter in agreement.

DE VERE
Yes, I guess it is better one be
a hypocrite than a scoundrel.

The crowd quiets. The Theater Gentleman stares at De Vere.

DE VERE (CONT'D)
Sir, take care whom you accuse in
public. You do not want to be
charged with slander ...

De Vere throws back his cloak and shows his sword.

DE VERE (CONT'D)
... or worst.

The crowd disperses, leaving the Theater Gentleman alone. He quickly walks away.

Marlowe stares --

MARLOWE
How did you know I used the name
Shakespeare?

DE VERE
It was the only name I believe
would not cause another row ...

They walk from the theater.

DE VERE (CONT'D)
I thought you were not to be in
London.

MARLOWE
Christopher Marlowe is not ..., for
I am Mr. William Shakespeare.

They laugh.

INT. DE VERE'S APARTMENT IN LONDON - NIGHT

De Vere and Marlowe sit in the parlor. Smithers enters with another bottle of wine. When he leaves, the men continue their talk --

MARLOWE

Devereux now sits on the Queen's
Privy Council. When can I return
to London?

DE VERE

He is popular at Court.

MARLOWE

Because the Queen gives him leave.

DE VERE

And she pays for his arrogance,
but this is not the time to risk
a schism in the realm.

Smithers enters.

MARLOWE

Philip is beaten, Mary is dead,
what now is at risk?

SMITHERS

My Lord, your guests have arrived.

Marlowe looks at De Vere.

MARLOWE

Guests?

DE VERE

Yes. Friends who wish to meet the
poet Christopher Marlowe.

Marlowe looks at De Vere, incredulously. Smithers announces
the guests --

SMITHERS

Lord Burghley ...

Burghley enters and bows to De Vere. De Vere bows --

DE VERE

Lord Burghley, welcome.

Marlowe bows to Lord Burghley.

BURGHLEY

Mr. Marlowe, you look well.

SMITHERS

Sir Walter Raleigh ...

SIR WALTER RALEIGH enters and bows. De Vere bows.

DE VERE
Sir Walter, welcome.

Raleigh turns to Marlowe. Marlowe bows to him.

MARLOWE
Sir Walter.

Raleigh stares at Marlowe and nods.

SMITHERS
Mr. Francis Bacon

FRANCIS BACON enters. His eye searches for Marlowe, and he smiles.

He bows to De Vere, but quickly turns his attention back to Marlowe.

BACON
I'm very excited to meet you, Sir.

Marlowe bows --

BACON (CONT'D)
None of that. There is much I wish to speak to you about your work.

Bacon puts his arm about Marlowe's shoulder and leads him across the room. De Vere watches.

SMITHERS
Gentlemen. His Grace, the Duke of York.

Smithers bows deeply.

Everyone turns toward the door and bows reverently, lowering their eyes. Marlowe follows. He hesitantly raises his eyes to glimpse at this Duke. Before him stands a woman dressed in the apparels of a Duke. It's QUEEN ELIZABETH.

ELIZABETH
Gentleman.

They all rise.

INT. DE VERE'S APARTMENT IN LONDON - NIGHT - LATER

The six people sit at a large round dining table in a circular room. Behind them hang a multitude of portraits, large and small, covering the wall, encircling them.

As they finish their meal and drink, there's laughter, as De Vere tells the story of his and Marlowe's adventure.

DE VERE

Marlowe asks, "Regards to your Queen ...?" He believed we were abandoned.

There's more laughter. Marlowe laughs as he looks toward Elizabeth who stares at him, intensely. Marlowe stops laughing.

DE VERE (CONT'D)

There is another explosion, and the room filled with smoke. I pushed Marlowe toward the door as I retrieved the dead man's pouch.

Everyone notices Elizabeth's silence. The laughter subsides. Elizabeth lights a clay pipe and blows the smoke --

ELIZABETH

So, tell me Mr. Marlowe, what do you think of our little group here?

MARLOWE

Your Majesty ...?

De Vere clears his throat, signaling to Marlowe --

MARLOWE (CONT'D)

I mean, Your Grace.

ELIZABETH

Surely, you are curious why such a band has come together?

Marlowe looks to De Vere, who turns away. The others watch.

MARLOWE

I have not given it any thought ...

ELIZABETH

Come now, Mr. Marlowe, do not quibble with me. What are your thoughts?

De Vere intercedes --

DE VERE

Your Grace, I am sure ...

Elizabeth's hand goes up silencing De Vere. Marlowe watches the exchange. He gathers his thoughts --

MARLOWE

I remember something Lord Oxford
once told me ...
(looking at De Vere)
Nothing is as it seems ...

De Vere conceals his smile.

ELIZABETH

Continue ...

MARLOWE

I believe Your Grace's interest
is not in what I think, but who I
am.

ELIZABETH

Yes, Mr. Marlowe, who are you?

MARLOWE

A question for which I have not
yet discovered an answer, but
when I do, Your Grace will be the
first to know.

Everyone looks at Elizabeth --

ELIZABETH

No. Mr. Marlowe ..., when you
discover it, you must live it.

Marlowe nods --

Elizabeth stares at him intensely --

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

Yes, I can see you speak truly.

Everyone smiles.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

Now to the matter at hand.

DE VERE

Your Grace ...

Everyone turns to look at Marlowe.

DE VERE (CONT'D)

Marlowe, I spoke to you once of a
Greater Cause.

Marlowe's eyes widen --

DE VERE (CONT'D)
 Through history, man moves from
 age to age.

As De Vere speaks, Marlowe's eyes follows the portraits on
 the wall that depict the different ages of Man.

DE VERE (OS) (CONT'D)
 And through the ages, we ask the
 question, "Who am I?" It is our
 innate ability ...

BACON (OS)
 (correcting)
 Our innate desire.

Each portrait portrays a historical scene through the ages,
 from far Eastern Empires to Ancient Greece --

DE VERE (OS)
 It is our desire to question our
 existence, as we are driven to
 seek an answer.

BACON (OS)
 Unfortunately, the question also
 sparks in us an innate fear. From
 the Roman Empire and through
 European and Mediterranean history.

BURGHLEY (OS)
 This fear erupts as chaos in the
 world.

MARLOWE (OS)
 You speak of the Inquisition ...?

Marlowe looks at the portraits that depict war and destruction,
 including images of man's enslavement of man --

BURGHLEY (OS)
 Yes, and much more. Other means
 such as war, famine and plague.
 This is man's resistance to change.

BACON (OS)
 As this knowledge passes from
 generation to generation, some
 are chosen to safe guard the Truth
 ...

Portraits depict sages, scholars and monks --

BACON (OS) (CONT'D)
 To ensure the coming of each new
 age ...

There is a portrait of a group sitting at a round table.

BACON (OS) (CONT'D)
 This is our destiny.

RALEIGH (OS)
 We sacrifice individual hopes and
 dreams ...

ELIZABETH
 (solemnly)
 We sacrifice love, family and
 country and choose ... a Greater
 Cause.

Marlowe looks at a portrait of Queen Elizabeth as the Virgin
 Queen.

Everyone stares at the Queen.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)
 We have come to ask, will you
 stand with us ...?

Marlowe looks at the six.

MARLOWE
 What can I do?

BACON
 Your writing. It is the voice of
 a New Age.

DE VERE
 Your plays reveal the individual
 heart and soul of men.

BACON
 An age where individuals will
 challenge the authority of the
 Church and State. Where Reason
 outweighs superstition.

RALEIGH
 Men will trust their own ideas
 over those of others, for good or
 ill.

Marlowe looks at Raleigh --

MARLOWE
What you speak is heresy ...

DE VERE
... and treason.

Marlowe looks at Elizabeth --

ELIZABETH
This is Greater than King or Pope ...

MARLOWE
... or Queen.

She nods.

BACON
It must grow in the hearts and
minds of men.

MARLOWE
Through stories on stage?

BACON
Storytellers have always spoken
truth ...

DE VERE
It is their nature.

Marlowe looks at De Vere and smiles.

ELIZABETH
So be it.

DE VERE
Marlowe, you will be known as Mr.
William Shakespeare ...

ELIZABETH
The Queen's poet.

She smiles. Everyone nods. After a moment --

MARLOWE
Why not my own name ...?

DE VERE
The name Christopher Marlowe is
now infamous. You have seen that
this evening.

ELIZABETH
I was told of the fate of the
young man, Shakspere.

Marlowe looks at her sadly.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)
If you risked death to avenge him,
will you risk life to give tribute
and honor to his name?

Marlowe stares at Elizabeth sorrowfully. He nods. Elizabeth
pulls her dagger from its sheath.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)
Let us swear to this with our
symbol of truth.

She lays her dagger on the table, handle forward. On the
handle is an inlaid red rose. Raleigh places his dagger on
the table. It also has a rose on its handle. Burghley and
Bacon do the same. De Vere takes his and places it on the
table next to the four.

Marlowe stares at the five daggers. Each of different designs
and each with an inlaid red rose. They stare at him. He takes
his dagger from its sheath and places it next to theirs.

BURGHLEY
We are sworn to this ...

BACON
Yes ...

RALEIGH
Aye ...

DE VERE
Yes.

They all look at Marlowe.

MARLOWE
Yes, I swear.

Marlowe stares at the roses inlaid in the handles of each
dagger on the table, as the candle light glistens on them.

EXT. THE ROSE THEATER, LONDON - DAY - 1590

SUPER: HENRY VI

A poster outside the theater is entitled, HENRY VI by William
Shakespeare. Sketched images of characters of the play are
superimposed over a single red rose.

EXT. THE YARD OF AN ABANDONED ENGLISH CHURCH - DUSK

SUPER: SPRING, 1593

Devereux arrives on horseback with a companion, Robert Catesby. Two men wait in the churchyard. It's Sebastian and Baines. Devereux gives the men a disdainful glance.

DEVEREUX

(to Catesby)

Why do you bring me to meet these Jesuits?

CATESBY

I told you, they have information about the man Marlowe.

SEBASTIAN

My Lord, we serve the same purpose, to rid England of the evil influence over her people.

Devereux glares at Sebastian.

DEVEREUX

We do not serve the same ..., when you plot against my Queen.

SEBASTIAN

Your Queen has abandoned God's church. She serves evil.

Catesby glares at Sebastian.

DEVEREUX

Enough! Give me what information you have, so I may leave this vile place.

Sebastian nods to Baines. The frail man speaks --

BAINES

The man Marlowe, also known as Marley and Le Deux was with me ...

Baines looks at Sebastian --

BAINES (CONT'D)

When I joined the College at Rheims. He pretends to be loyal to the Queen.

DEVEREUX

Why do you betray your companion
to me?

BAINES

In his zeal to prove his loyalty
to the Queen, he poisoned the
school's water on Walsingham's
order.

Devereux stares at Baines, suspiciously.

SEBASTIAN

This Marley, or Marlowe, turns
with the wind to serve his own
faithless purpose. His treachery
is known throughout the Low
Country, and now his plays fill
the minds of your countrymen with
free-thinking godlessness ...

DEVEREUX

Yes ..., but Marlowe has powerful
friends ...

SEBASTIAN

Are you not a powerful enemy?

Devereux glares at Sebastian.

DEVEREUX

(to Baines)

Tell me all you know of him, his
companions, everything.

Sebastian smiles at Catesby.

DEVEREUX (CONT'D)

And, know this ... I speak with you
to rid England of an enemy,
nothing more.

SEBASTIAN

Of course, My Lord ...

Sebastian bows.

INT. PRIVY COUNCIL CHAMBERS - DAY

The council meets. An ailing Burghley, Cecil and the others
are listening to the Queen. Devereux sits away from the table,
seeming disinterested.

ELIZABETH
Give the order to the farmers to
increase their yield.

CECIL
Yes, Your Majesty.

ELIZABETH
If that is all, I wish to rest
before tonight's performance.

Elizabeth stands. All the members stand and bow, except
Devereux.

DEVEREUX
I have one thing more, Your Majesty.

Elizabeth looks at Devereux and sits back down, disappointed.
Everyone sits.

ELIZABETH
Yes, Robert, what is it?

Devereux stands like a conceited prosecutor --

DEVEREUX
I wish to speak of the continued
payment of men who cause strife
in your realm.

ELIZABETH
Who are these men?

DEVEREUX
The writer Christopher Marlowe,
specifically.

ELIZABETH
You speak of the play writer, again?

She looks around, dismayed.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)
Is it not his play We are to see
this evening?

BURGHLEY
Yes, Your Majesty. His new play,
"A Massacre in Paris."

ELIZABETH
Did We not get a report of his
deeds from Drake?

BURGHLEY

Yes, Your Majesty, a good report.

DEVEREUX

However, new information has presented itself ...

Burghley and Cecil look at Devereux, suspiciously.

Devereux unrolls a document onto the council table --

DEVEREUX

This is a sworn affidavit by a Mr. Richard Baines, who witnessed Mr. Marlowe's attempt to enroll at the Catholic College at Rheims, a stronghold of your Majesty's enemies.

CECIL

Baines is a prat! He is a traitor ...

Lord Burghley pats his son's hand to calm him.

DEVEREUX

Yet, Marlowe continues to be paid as an agent of Your Majesty.

Elizabeth looks at Burghley --

ELIZABETH

Lord Burghley, please explain.

BURGHLEY

Your Majesty, Mr. Marlowe was commissioned by Sir Francis.

DEVEREUX

Your late spy master coddled Mr. Marlowe, and this council continues to do so.

Devereux unrolls more documents --

DEVEREUX (CONT'D)

These are reports that it is his heretical writings that sway the people against Your Majesty's church.

Elizabeth glances at Burghley, perplexed.

ELIZABETH

Lord Burghley?

Devereux intercepts, before Burghley can speak --

DEVEREUX

And as I reported before, it was this Marlowe, who caused the death of Sydney and others in the Low Country ...

ELIZABETH

Enough! I will not hear that debate again.

Burghley glances at Elizabeth, but she averts her gaze.

Devereux smiles at their exchange.

Elizabeth stares straight ahead with Royal indifference --

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

Lord Burghley, you will look into these charges. We will not be bothered with such matters.

Devereux's smile suddenly abates --

DEVEREUX

Burghley ...?

Elizabeth glares at Devereux.

ELIZABETH

You question the integrity of my most loyal Councilman?

DEVEREUX

No, I'm sure Lord Burghley will be forthcoming Your Majesty.

BURGHLEY

I will convene the Star Chambers to make inquiries since Mr. Marlowe is still Your Majesty's commissioned agent. He deserves no less.

DEVEREUX

Of course.

ELIZABETH

So be it.

Elizabeth stands. Everyone stands and bows. She leaves the Chamber.

CECIL
 (to Burghley)
 Marlowe is no heretic.

BURGHLEY
 Yes, but what concerns me more is
 how Devereux got evidence from Mr.
 Robert Baines.

CECIL
 You believe he conspires with
 Catholic traitors?

BURGHLEY
 We shall hold a second
 investigation of the Earl of Essex.

Across the room, Devereux stands with the Second Minister.

DEVEREUX
 I knew Burghley would be quick to
 Marlowe's defense, but he trumped
 me with the Star Chamber.

SECOND MINISTER
 They will find guilt in Marlowe's
 own writings.

DEVEREUX
 Yes, but I need assurance Mr.
 Marlowe never gives any testimony
 on this, or any matter.

The Second Minister stares at Devereux.

INT. A LONDON INN - EVENING

A disguised Devereux sits at a back table. Across from him
 in the shadow, sits another man.

DEVEREUX
 I was told you can be trusted to
 do a deed and ask no questions.

MAN IN THE SHADOW
 That is my specialty.

DEVEREUX
 You know Christopher Marlowe?

MAN IN THE SHADOW
 I have heard his name.

DEVEREUX

I believe him to be a catholic agent, and he waits for an opportunity to do harm to the Queen. It is Her Majesty's wish this man be dispatched.

MAN IN THE SHADOW

Does the Queen have a wish how this is to be done?

DEVEREUX

It is to be public so no suspicion falls on the Queen. I want people to believe his roguish ways have caught up with him.

MAN IN THE SHADOW

And my pay?

Devereux takes a pouch and slides it across the table. The man feels its weight.

DEVEREUX

He is at Deptford. It must be done before a fortnight.

MAN IN THE SHADOW

I will act as though a warrant is upon his head.

The Man laughs sardonically.

Devereux stares at him, incredulously. He gets up and leaves. After a moment, the man leans from the shadow. It's Frizer.

EXT. DAME ELEANOR'S ROOMING HOUSE, DEPTFORD - NIGHT

SUPER: MAY 29, 1593

Poley and Skeres leave the house. Skeres carries a large canvass tarp. He folds it --

SKERES

Did you see on the table, he was making his will?

POLEY

I saw it.

SKERES

This is a foolish plan.

POLEY

He will agree to it, or he will surely die.

SKERES

Marlowe is no longer a schoolboy.

POLEY

You fear him?

SKERES

Remember, he knows how to use that rapier he carries.

POLEY

Burghley has given us instructions, and we will carry them out.

SKERES

We cannot just throw him across a horse this time.

POLEY

I will if he gives me no choice.

SKERES

Well, this time, I will come up behind him.

Poley frowns at Skeres and shakes his head.

INT. DAME ELEANOR'S ROOMING HOUSE - NIGHT

Marlowe sits at the table in the small room. A single candle is lit. Shakspeare's book, and the parchments of his will are spewed on the table.

Marlowe finishes a letter from Lord Burghley. He smiles. Suddenly, there's a knock at the door.

DAME ELEANOR BULL (50) stands outside Marlowe's room.

DAME BULL

Mr. Marlowe, you wished to speak with me?

Marlowe nervously glances at something on the floor, covered with the bed linen. She knocks again.

DAME BULL(OS)(CONT'D)

Mr. Marlowe, are you there?

Marlowe steps to the door and opens it slightly. She looks at him suspiciously and tries to look in the room. He blocks her view --

MARLOWE

Friends will dine with me tomorrow evening. Can you prepare a meal in the private room?

DAME BULL

How many will there be?

MARLOWE

Four, I believe.

DAME BULL

I assured Lord Burghley of your board and lodging, but for such a meal, there will be a cost.

MARLOWE

These are my friends. Leave the reckoning to me.

Bull stares at Marlowe as he closes the door.

INT. DAME ELEANOR'S ROOMING HOUSE - NIGHT

SUPER: May 30, 1593

Marlowe, Poley and Skeres drink as the servants prepare the dining table for four. Skeres notices the fourth seat.

SKERES

I see you arranged for four. Who is joining us.

MARLOWE

Ingram Frizer.

Poley and Skeres glance at each other.

MARLOWE (CONT'D)

He said he would be in town for a few days, so I sent word he should join us.

POLEY

Devereux plots against you. There is no telling who he might use.

MARLOWE

If I begin to question any, then I must question all, including you.

POLEY

We brought you word from Burghley.

MARLOWE

How can I trust even Burghley?
For my demise might suit all,
including the Queen.

Frizer enters the room.

FRIZER

Very True. No man can be trusted
who is paid to do dastardly deeds.

Frizer steps over and pours himself a mug of wine as the others watch him. He turns and raises his drink.

FRIZER (CONT'D)

Love all men, but trust few --
and do harm to those who harm you.

Marlowe raises his drink. Poley and Skeres look on, grudgingly.

THE SERVANT

The meal is ready, Sir.

The four men take their seats at the table each watching the other. The Servant Woman serves the meal. The men are silent.

INT. DAME ELEANOR'S ROOMING HOUSE - NIGHT - LATER

In the hallway outside the private room, the loud sounds of men arguing is heard --

MARLOWE (OS)

You said you would pay for this ...

The Servant Woman comes upstairs carrying a bottle of wine.

FRIZER (OS)

I will not pay.

She listens at the door.

MARLOWE (OS)

You will pay this reckoning with
crowns or flesh.

FRIZER (OS)

So be it. Take it if you dare.

There is a loud sound of furniture being tossed about the room.

POLEY (OS)

Stop this.

The melee continues.

TWO GENTLEMEN come upstairs, listening outside the room.

GENTLEMAN#1

What is happening?

THE SERVANT

They asked for another bottle of wine ...

She raises the bottle --

THE SERVANT (CONT'D)

When I came back, I heard them arguing.

SEVERAL GUESTS come out of their rooms. One of the Gentleman tries to open the door, but it is locked.

DAME BULL

What is going on here?

Bull makes her way pass the guests now outside the door.

THE SERVANT

Ma'am, Mr. Marlowe ...

DAME BULL

Mind your tongue girl!

THE SERVANT

The gentleman and his friend are fighting and the door is locked ...

There is a murmur among the guests repeating Marlowe's name.

Bull tries the door.

DAME BULL

Go down and bring me the key.

There is a crash, then silence. Everyone stares at the door. After a moment, the door swings open.

POLEY

Marlowe is dead. Someone call for the Royal Constable.

Poley steps back and everyone looks inside.

POLEY (CONT'D)
Christopher Marlowe is dead.

Next to the over turned table is the body of a man dressed in Marlowe's clothes with a black-handled dagger protruding from his face.

Frizer has blood on his hand and clothing.

INT. LORD BURGHLEY'S HOME - MORNING

Lord Burghley is having breakfast. Robert Cecil enters the room. His face is solemn. Burghley looks up.

CECIL
Christopher Marlowe is dead.

Burghley stares at him and nods his head. He continues eating.

Cecil leaves.

INT. DEVEREUX LONDON APARTMENT AT WHITEHALL - MORNING

Devereux eats breakfast in his chamber. A Servant enters and hands him a note. He reads it and smiles --

DEVEREUX
I will wear blue today.

The servant bows and leaves.

INT. DE VERE'S APARTMENT IN LONDON - MORNING

Smithers enters De Vere's bedroom. De Vere is asleep in bed. Smithers opens the drapes letting in the morning sun.

De Vere stirs --

DE VERE
Not now, Smithers.

Smithers walks out, but stops at the door.

SMITHERS
My Lord, Mr. Marlowe has been killed.

De Vere sits up --

DE VERE
What?

SMITHERS
Christopher Marlowe is dead.

De Vere gets out of bed.

DE VERE
Bring me my clothes.

SMITHERS
Yes, My Lord.

Smithers leaves.

DE VERE
Damn him.

He walks to the window and stares out.

EXT. A ROAD IN ITALY - DUSK - A WEEK LATER

SUPER: ITALY

The Two Italians are driving a carriage on a road in Italy. On the door, the name BRABANTIO is affixed with a crest.

I/E. THE CARRIAGE - DUSK

Christopher Marlowe is asleep in the carriage.

INT. WHITEHALL CASTLE - AFTERNOON

SUPER: LONDON, 1605

During a royal performance before KING JAMES I, THE KING'S MEN perform the play, *Othello*.

On stage, actors perform the end of the last scene --

"LODOVICO"
(To "IAGO")
O Spartan dog, More fell than
anguish, hunger, or the sea! Look
on the tragic loading of this bed;
This is thy work: the object
poisons sight; Let it be hid.
Gratiano, keep the house, And
seize upon the fortunes of the
Moor, For they succeed on you. To
you, lord governor, Remains the
censure of this hellish villain;
The time, the place, the torture:
O, enforce it! Myself will
straight aboard: and to the state.
This heavy act with heavy heart
relate.

After a few moments, the actors gather to take their bows, as King James, with NOBLES to his left and right, applaud. Among them are Cecil, Bacon, and MEMBERS OF COURT and GUEST. Among the actors is Marlowe as "BRABANTIO." He is older. His hair has receded on the top of his head. All the features of the young Marlowe are gone.

One man in the audience takes an interest in Marlowe. It's Sebastian. He's also older and dressed as a gentleman. He stares at Marlowe. He turns to the woman next to him as they applaud --

SEBASTIAN

Who is the one playing Brabantio?

The Woman looks at him, incredulously.

AUDIENCE WOMAN

That, Sir, is William Shakespeare.

Sebastian smiles embarrassingly and continues to applaud.

Marlowe scans the audience as he and the other actors take their bows. He sees Poley standing in the back of the room watching someone in the audience.

Marlowe follows his gaze until he sees Sebastian.

Poley sees Marlowe staring at Sebastian. Marlowe quickly turns back to Poley, but he's gone.

INT. THE CORRIDORS OF WHITEHALL - AFTERNOON

The actors make their way from the stage.

Marlowe, still in costume, walks through the corridor away from the others. An old, suppressed rage slowly rises. Poley steps from behind a pillar. Marlowe glares at him --

MARLOWE

Sebastian is here.

POLEY

I know. We can do nothing.

MARLOWE

You may be unable, but I will ...

POLEY

I cannot allow you to do anything.

Marlowe looks at Poley with disbelief --

MARLOWE
I'm no longer a schoolboy.

Marlowe draws his sword.

POLEY
So I'm told.

MARLOWE
You will not stop me.

POLEY
I will not have to ...

Marlowe hears a sound behind him, but before he can turn, Skeres hits him with a club. Marlowe collapses.

POLEY (CONT'D)
What did you do?

Poley drops to Marlowe's side.

POLEY (CONT'D)
You did not have to hit him so hard.

SKERES
I did not want to confront his
blade.

Skeres watches as Poley caresses Marlowe's head in his lap.

INT. ANTECHAMBER IN WHITEHALL CASTLE - LATER

Marlowe lies on a couch. His dagger and sword lie on a table across the room. As he wakes, Marlowe sees De Vere sitting across from him. De Vere is dressed as a Frenchman.

MARLOWE
Am I dead? For I see a man I know
to be dead and buried now a year.

DE VERE
You are no more dead than am I.

Marlowe sits up and looks around. He touches his head --

MARLOWE
I suspected as much when my
inquiry of your grave rendered
two different locations.

DE VERE
The sudden need of my demise left
some details wanting.

MARLOWE

Why the ruse?

DE VERE

A time comes when one life must
diminish for another to flourish.
Some believed I aided the unknown
Shakespeare with his masterful work.

MARLOWE

Little do they know ...

Marlowe stands.

DE VERE

So, You will confront Sebastian?

MARLOWE

I will fulfill a promise.

DE VERE

To avenge the death of a man now
long dead ... or to cling to a life
you cannot let die?

Marlowe laughs --

MARLOWE

You believe I covet my old life ...?

DE VERE

William Shakespeare is renowned,
while Christopher Marlowe is
obscure ...

MARLOWE

The work is mine.

DE VERE

But, not by your name ...

He watches Marlowe who paces anxiously.

DE VERE (CONT'D)

It is strange how characters in
your plays struggle with this
same dilemma, to choose one self
or another.

Marlowe throws him a wrathful look.

DE VERE (CONT'D)

Your work is truly magnificent.

MARLOWE

Is it mine?

De Vere smiles.

DE VERE

You are William Shakespeare.

MARLOWE

Damn this strife!

After a moment --

DE VERE

If you do this, the work of
William Shakespeare will be
branded a fraud, and our Cause lost.

MARLOWE

And, what of Sebastian?

DE VERE

Like Devereux, he too will meet
his fate.

Marlowe stares out the window toward the courtyard --

FADE TO:

EXT. THE TOWER OF LONDON YARD - DAY

SUPER: THE TOWER OF LONDON, 1601

A guard escorts Devereux up the steps to the execution's
block. The Crowd yell in anger --

CROWD

Traitor! Traitor!

Devereux tries to be fearless. He kneels behind the block.

CROWD (CONT'D)

Traitor! Traitor!

Devereux looks into the taunting crowd, and suddenly, with
horror, his eyes widen. He sees Marlowe. Next to him stands
Frizer, grinning. Both men stand silently in the noisy crowd,
glaring at him.

Doomed, Devereux quickly drops his head on the block and
raises his hands. The executioner's blade strikes.

INT. ANTECHAMBER IN WHITEHALL CASTLE - DAY

As Marlowe continues to stare out the window, De Vere notices an expression of satisfaction on his face.

DE VERE
Poley and Skeres watch Sebastian closely. When his conspirator's plot is exposed, the same fate will be visited upon them all.

The two men are silent. There's a knock on the door.

DE VERE (CONT'D)
Enter.

POLEY
My Lord, there is someone for Mr. Shakespeare.

Marlowe glares at Poley. Poley steps aside and a YOUNG WOMAN and YOUNG MAN enter the chamber.

Marlowe is surprised as he stares at the Young Woman. He immediately recognizes her resemblance to Will Shakspere, especially her gray-colored eyes.

The Young Woman looks back and forth between Marlowe and De Vere, bewildered.

POLEY (CONT'D)
(to De Vere)
Count Le Deux, may I present ...

Interrupting --

MARLOWE
Susanna ..., I would recognize you anywhere.

She looks at Marlowe and smiles, fondly. Marlowe turns to De Vere.

MARLOWE (CONT'D)
My Lord, may I present Susanna Shakespeare.

Susanna curtsies to De Vere.

DE VERE
(with a French accent)
Ah, the daughter of Monsieur Shakespeare. I'm very pleased to meet you.

He kisses her hand. Marlowe stares at her face. She turns to Marlowe.

SUSANNA

May I present Dr. John Hall.

The Man standing next to Poley steps forward. He bows.

HALL

Count Le Deux, I'm honored.

Hall turns to Marlowe.

HALL (CONT'D)

Mr. Shakespeare, I'm deeply honored to finally meet you.

Marlowe nods, then looks at Susanna. She smiles at him. There's an awkward silence.

DE VERE

(with a French accent)

Monsieur Poley, take Mademoiselle Shakespeare and Dr. Hall to the Ballroom, while Monsieur Shakespeare changes from his stage clothes.

(to Susanna)

Your father will meet you there. I'm sure you have much to speak about.

Poley steps forward. Susanna curtsies and Hall bows. The two leave with Poley.

MARLOWE

She looks exactly like him.

He turns and gives De Vere a suspicious look.

MARLOWE (CONT'D)

What is she doing here ...?

DE VERE

Word came to me that she wished to meet her celebrated father.

MARLOWE

I'm not her father.

DE VERE

Yes, but she doesn't know that, yet ...

MARLOWE

What am I to do?

DE VERE

Change your dress. His Majesty
waits to greet Mr. William
Shakespeare.

Marlowe looks at De Vere, incredulously --

MARLOWE

You've taken the name Count Le
Deux ...?

DE VERE

Well ..., you were not using it
anymore.

The two men leave the room.

INT. WHITEHALL CASTLE BALLROOM - AFTERNOON - LATER

The Ballroom is filled with Nobles, Gentlemen and Ladies.
Marlowe and the other players enter. The Court applauds.
Marlowe looks around and sees Susanna and Hall standing to
the side.

Sebastian stands across the room with a group of men watching
Marlowe and the players greet the court.

Suddenly, there is trumpeted fanfare. King James enters. Men
bow and women curtsy. King James walks toward the players.

They bow.

KING JAMES

My dear Mr. Shakespeare ...

Marlowe, and the players rise.

KING JAMES (CONT'D)

We continue to be amazed with
your words. The characters of
your plays truly speak to their
nature.

MARLOWE

I'm happy Your Majesty is pleased.

KING JAMES

Your words, Sir, are more than
service to your King, they are
service to the world.

Marlowe bows. He sees Susanna.

MARLOWE

Your Majesty, I would like to
present, Miss Susanna Shakespeare,
my daughter.

He reaches for her. Susanna's eyes widen as she walks to
Marlowe's side. She curtsies.

KING JAMES

I am charmed, my dear. You must
be proud of your father.

Susanna looks at Marlowe.

SUSANNA

Yes, Your Majesty. I am very proud.

KING JAMES

So are We. His sacrifice continues
to reap great benefits for us all.

James adjusts his dagger on his waist as he turns to greet
the other nobles of the Court. Marlowe notices the familiar
rose on its handle.

Susanna is flustered with excitement.

SUSANNA

I just met the King.

Marlowe smiles at her.

From behind Marlowe, RICHARD BURBAGE, the actor who played
Othello steps up.

BURBAGE

Mr. Shakespeare ...

Marlowe turns.

BURBAGE (CONT'D)

I would like to introduce ...

Marlowe eyes quickly scan the men. Among them stands Sebastian.

BURBAGE (CONT'D)

Mr. Catesby, Mr. Wright, Mr.
Winter and Mr. Percy.

Percy is Sebastian.

Marlowe gives each man an equal glance as he reaches for his dagger, but it's missing.

BURBAGE (CONT'D)

Gentlemen, may I present ... Mr.
William Shakespeare.

Marlowe nods to the men.

MARLOWE

At your service, gentlemen.

Skeres watches from across the room.

CATESBY

I find your words riveting.

MARLOWE

Thank you, Sir.

Sebastian speaks from behind the men.

SEBASTIAN

I, too, am intrigued by how you
give your characters such insight
into their souls.

MARLOWE

Who else can know one's own soul?

Everyone turns to listen to the exchange.

SEBASTIAN

Do you not believe God knows a
man's soul?

MARLOWE

Yes, but, unfortunately, God keeps
his own council.

People laugh.

SEBASTIAN

So, you justify men's faithless
actions, because they speak their
mind.

MARLOWE

God gives every man the power to
speak his heart and mind.

SEBASTIAN

But, here men speak your words,
Sir, ...

MARLOWE

No man speaks my words in place
of his own.

SEBASTIAN

They do, Sir! We have heard it,
here, tonight!

Marlowe smiles with satisfaction --

MARLOWE

No, Sir, you have only heard
characters speak words in a play,
which brilliant actors have
performed.

The crowd laughs. Sebastian, ridiculed, hesitantly forces a
smile.

KING JAMES

Do forgive yourself, Sir. I, too,
find I forget myself in Mr.
Shakespeare's plays.

James and the crowd applaud. Marlowe bows.

MARLOWE

Your Majesty.

Marlowe smiles at Susanna.

Sebastian glares at Marlowe over the shoulders of the other
men.

INT. ANTECHAMBER IN WHITEHALL CASTLE - DAY

De Vere and Poley wait as the sound of applause reaches the
chamber.

POLEY

It sounds like all ends well.

DE VERE

For now.

Poley turns to leave.

DE VERE (CONT'D)

Poley ...

Poley stops. De Vere hands him Marlowe's dagger.

DE VERE (CONT'D)

Return this to him.

Poley reaches for the dagger, but De Vere holds it --

DE VERE (CONT'D)
Christopher Marlowe can never
return.

Poley glares at De Vere and takes the dagger. He leaves.

INT. WHITEHALL CASTLE BALLROOM - DAY

Sebastian watches Marlowe talking to Susanna and Dr. Hall.
Several people speak to them. Catesby approaches Sebastian.

CATESBY
Do not hold on to such pettiness.

They watch as Marlowe, Susanna and Dr. Hall leave the ballroom.

SEBASTIAN
I will not be bested by an
interloper.

CATESBY
Remember, you are here for our
cause.

Catesby nods toward King James.

CATESBY (CONT'D)
Do not jeopardize that.

SEBASTIAN
Yes, you are right.

Catesby laughs starkly.

CATESBY
I seem to remember another poet
who also got his in the end.

Skeres watches Catesby and Sebastian.

CATESBY (CONT'D)
I always imagined Marlowe knowing ...

Sebastian suddenly stops --

CATESBY (CONT'D)
... it was we who persuaded
Devereux of his needed demise.

SEBASTIAN
What name did you say?

CATESBY

Surely, you remember our old
friend Christopher Marlowe.

Sebastian quickly turns and scans the room, frantically.

Across the room, Skeres notices Sebastian.

As Sebastian turn to leave, Catesby grabs his arm --

CATESBY (CONT'D)

Where are you going ...?

SEBASTIAN

To find an old friend.

Sebastian pulls his arm away from Catesby and walks away --

Catesby watches as Sebastian leaves the ballroom. He returns
to his companions, saying nothing.

INT. CORRIDORS OF WHITEHALL - DAY

Sebastian walks quickly through the corridors searching. He
sees Marlowe, Susanna and Dr. Hall ahead. He draws his dagger
and follows quietly.

They turn down another corridor. Sebastian moves quickly to
catch up. As he turns down the corridor, Poley suddenly steps
out in front of him.

Sebastian recognizes him --

SEBASTIAN

You!

POLEY

Yes ...!

Poley steps forward and Sebastian's eyes widen as Poley
drives Marlowe's dagger into his heart. Sebastian struggles,
but Skeres steps behind him and covers his nose and mouth.
He suffocates Sebastian, forcing him to die. They lay him on
the floor --

SKERES

I thought it would be easier.

POLEY

It never is with men like him.

They hear footsteps approaching.

POLEY (CONT'D)

Take him there ...

Poley points to a shadowed area. He pulls Marlowe's dagger from Sebastian's chest and wipes the blood in the man's cloak. They wrap the body in the cloak.

SKERES

Look ...

Skeres points to blood on Poley's coat.

POLEY

Give me your coat.

The two men frantically exchange coats. Skeres drags the body out of sight. Poley sheathes the dagger just as Marlowe sees him. Marlowe stops --

MARLOWE

You again ...?

Marlowe quickly looks behind him and stands on his guard.

MARLOWE (CONT'D)

Where is Skeres?

POLEY

De Vere ordered us to bring you.
Forgive me.

MARLOWE

What do you want now?

POLEY

De Vere wanted me to return this ...

Poley hands him the dagger. Marlowe stares at it.

POLEY (CONT'D)

Take it.

Marlowe takes it. He pulls the blade from the sheath --

MARLOWE

You know a man like Christopher
Marlowe would never forgive what
you did to me ...

Poley stares at him, then at the dagger. Skeres listens from the shadows.

After a moment, Marlowe sheaths the dagger.

MARLOWE (CONT'D)
 It's good for you Christopher
 Marlowe is dead.

He hands the dagger back to Poley.

MARLOWE (CONT'D)
 This belonged to him. I am but a
 lowly poet.

POLEY
 You keep it. I'm sure he would
 have wanted you to have it to
 remember him.

Marlowe looks at Poley and smiles. He puts it into his coat pocket. He turns to walk away.

POLEY (CONT'D)
 Mr. Shakespeare.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE turns. Poley bows deeply.

SHAKESPEARE
 Mr. Poley.

Shakespeare returns the bow. He stands and walks down the corridor. Skeres steps out, and they watch as Shakespeare disappear.

Skeres looks at Poley and smiles. Poley glares at him and walks away.

INT. ANTECHAMBER IN WHITEHALL CASTLE - DAY

De Vere stands over Marlowe's rapier still on the table with his back to the door.

Poley enters.

POLEY
 Christopher Marlowe will not return.

De Vere smiles. He picks up the rapier and breaks it over his knee.

POLEY (CONT'D)
 And, the Jesuit Sebastian is dead.

De Vere quickly turns and looks at Poley --

DE VERE
 What have you done?

POLEY

I fulfilled the promise of a friend.

Backing out of the chamber, Poley bows and gives De Vere a big smile as he closes the door.

EXT. ON THE ROAD OUTSIDE DEPTFORD - DAY

The sun is high in the sky. A carriage travels from Central London. The door of the carriage bears the Shakespeare Coat-of-Arms.

A signpost reads Deptford.

I/E. SHAKESPEARE'S CARRIAGE - DAY

Shakespeare, Susanna and Hall are in the carriage.

HALL

Sir, there is a matter I wish to discuss with you.

He looks affectionately at Susanna. Shakespeare looks at Hall then at Susanna. She smiles at them both.

EXT. ST. NICHOLAS CHURCH, DEPTFORD - DAY

At the church's graveyard, Shakespeare carries a single red rose. He searches for a headstone. Susanna follows him.

Hall waits at the carriage.

As he searches, Shakespeare passes two gravediggers digging a new grave.

Finally, he stops in front of a small headstone. He stares at it for a long moment until Susanna comes up behind him.

SUSANNA

Did you know him?

The small headstone reads, "Christopher Marlowe, Poet, 1564 - 1593."

SHAKESPEARE

We were not friends, but I learned so much from his writings. If he lived, it would be his name renowned, not mine.

Susanna takes the rose from her Shakespeare --

SUSANNA

What's in a name? That which we
call a rose ...

She places it on the grave --

SUSANNA

... by any other name, would smell
as sweet.

She looks at Shakespeare and smiles. He stares at her, then
smiles back. He embraces his daughter, and they stand over
the grave of Christopher Marlowe together.

FADE TO BLACK:

EPILOGUE:

SUPER: SONNET 81, BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

SHAKESPEARE(VO)

Or I shall live your epitaph to
make, Or you survive when I in
earth am rotten, From hence your
memory death cannot take, Although
in me each part will be forgotten.
Your name from hence immortal
life shall have, Though I, once
gone, to all the world must die:
The earth can yield me but a
common grave, When you entombed
in men's eyes shall lie. Your
monument shall be my gentle verse,
Which eyes not yet created shall
o'er-read; And tongues to be,
your being shall rehearse, When
all the breathers of this world
are dead; You still shall live,
such virtue hath my pen, Where
breath most breathes, even in the
mouths of men.