

THE HEART OF A KING: TRIALS OF GLORIANA

by

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HONORS THESIS

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ABSTRACT/OVERVIEW

Elizabeth I Tudor is one of if not the most recognizable monarch in English history. There is, however, much ambiguity surrounding her choices and her motivations behind them. In some of her writings, she betrayed a sense of inner conflict regarding what we today would consider her gender role in society. Throughout her reign, she was caught in the middle of a battle between what society expected of her as a female and what society expected of her as a monarch. This thesis explores that battle in a dramatic format. *The Heart of a King: Trials of Gloriana* is the book for a musical telling of highlights from the life of the Virgin Queen.

This musical will feature songs that will connect vignettes of Elizabeth's private life as they may have happened. The most important aspect of this musical, however, is Elizabeth's physical representation. The character of Elizabeth is scripted to be played by a genderqueer actor or a feminine presenting male actor in order to visualize the difference between her and the other figures from that time. My goal for this project is to reexamine history many of us think we know completely and help provide queer representation in theatre.

The idea for this thesis comes from my interest in the queen's gender anxiety. Throughout her reign Elizabeth was at war within herself. This was a war between the expectations placed upon her as a female and the expectations placed upon her as a monarch. Through various passages in speeches and writings made by the queen, we can discern that she did not feel like a woman in regards to what the gender roles of 16th century England dictated. In modern terms, we would probably refer to her as "non-binary." This is the purpose for the queer casting of the role of Elizabeth. The purpose of

this musical is to tell the story of Elizabeth Tudor while creating a visual representation of the gender related conflict occurring within her.

The events of the musical highlight important personal moments in the life of Elizabeth Tudor. Most of these conflicts depicted in the script are directly related to her marriage. One of the defining features of Elizabeth's rule was the fact that she never married, which caused problems on both a personal and political level. Despite her not marrying, she maintained a very close (albeit turbulent) and arguably romantic relationship with her favourite, Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester.

One of her main political adversaries was her first cousin once removed, Mary Stuart, or as she is more popularly known, Mary Queen of Scots. This feud involved an attempt by Elizabeth to marry her cousin to Dudley, a protestant rebellion in Scotland that may have been funded by Elizabeth, and the eventual abdication, imprisonment, and execution of the Queen of Scots.

By her side through many of her major conflicts is her most trusted councilor, William Cecil, Baron Burghley. These figures all play major roles in the script, as they all played major roles throughout the life of the Virgin Queen.

The script of the musical, which makes up the majority of this thesis, is a compilation of scenes that will serve as fence posts for the fence that is the entire musical. The fencing itself is the music that is not included in this thesis project.

The "fencing" I mentioned has not yet been written, but it has been outlined and brainstormed. The style of the music will be a mostly pop/rock musical theatre with the occasional touch of disco influence.

Many of the songs are going to highlight big moments in Elizabeth's life that

bridge or follow other major moments seen in the script. These moments will appear as big group/production numbers. These moments include the defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588, the execution of Mary Stuart, and the coronation of Elizabeth herself.

Other songs highlight more personal moments in Elizabeth's journey and will provide emotional bridges from one scene to the next. These songs cover Elizabeth's relationship with Dudley, her relationship with her own physical beauty, and her reflections upon her death.⁰⁰²⁰

The rest of the songs are either emotional songs for other characters or conflict songs. For example, conflict songs would highlight the feud between Mary Stuart and Elizabeth and Elizabeth's controversial courtship of the Duke of Anjou. The former include Dudley's lament about the unrequited love of Elizabeth.

These songs would serve as either plot bridges or emotional bridges in order to connect the non-linear vignettes of the script.

Following this thesis process, I am hoping to grow this musical into a fully realized production. Not only is it structured in a way that is unfamiliar to popular musical theatre, but it would provide much needed representation to trans and non-binary actors and artists, as well as viewers and audience members.

The Heart of a King: Trials of Gloriana

Chris Brown

Cast of Characters

<u>ELIZABETH:</u>	Queen Elizabeth I Tudor. Queen of England from 1558-1603. Lived 1533-1603. Known as the Virgin Queen, because she never married and never bore children. To be played by a feminine presenting male or trans actor.
<u>DUDLEY:</u>	Robert Dudley, 1st Earl of Leicester. Favourite of Queen Elizabeth I. She appointed him her Master of Horse upon her ascension in 1558. Lived 1532-1588.
<u>CECIL:</u>	William Cecil, 1st Baron Burghley. Served as chief advisor to Elizabeth, Lord High Tresurer, and Secretary of State. Lived 1520-1598.
<u>MARY STUART:</u>	Queen Mary I Stuart of Scotland, better known as Mary, Queen of Scots. Queen of France 1559-1560. Queen of Scotland 1542-1567. Executed in England after almost 19 years of imprisonment in 1587. Lived 1542-1587.
<u>BESS:</u>	Elizabeth Talbot, Countess of Shrewsbury, known as Bess of Hardwick. Influential socialite, lady in waiting to Elizabeth I. Lived 1527-1608.
<u>MARY BEATON:</u>	One of four Marys who served as ladies in waiting and close friends to Mary Stuart. Lived 1543-1598.
<u>MARY FLEMING:</u>	One of the four Marys who served as ladies in waiting and close friends to Mary Stuart. Lived 1542-1581.
<u>MARY LIVINGSTON:</u>	One of the four Marys who served as ladies in waiting and close friends to Mary Stuart. Lived 1541-1579.

MARY SETON: One of the four Marys who served as ladies in waiting and close friends to Mary Stuart. Lived 1542-1615.

FRANCIS: Francis, Duke of Anjou and Alençon. Courted Elizabeth I for a time. Lived 1555-1584.

WALSINGHAM: Sir Francis Walsingham. Principal secretary and spymaster to Elizabeth I. Lived 1532-1590.

MARY I: Mary I Tudor. Queen of England 1553-1558. Staunch Catholic. Lived 1516-1558.

THOMAS PARRY: Sir Thomas Parry. Comptroller to the household of Elizabeth I. Lived 1515-1560.

KAT ASHLEY: Katherine Ashley. Governess and friend to Elizabeth I. Lived 1502-1565.

ROGER: Roger Ascham. Scholar and tutor to Elizabeth I. Lived 1515-1568.

PAGE: Messenger.

ACT IScene I

ELIZABETH stands in a great room at Hatfield House staring out a WINDOW at what seems like nothing. There is a tense silence as KAT ASHLEY watches on from behind her.

THOMAS PARRY enters in a hurry and stops behind Elizabeth.

THOMAS PARRY
Milady, we've received word from London.

ELIZABETH
Cecil?

THOMAS PARRY
Says that Lady Jane Grey has abdicated in favor of your sister Mary.

ELIZABETH
Half sister.

THOMAS PARRY
Yes, milady, half sister. Northumberland will likely be executed and Mary will accede to the throne.

ELIZABETH
Now I'm free to make my move.

THOMAS PARRY
I would be cautious were I in your position, milady. Regardless of your father's line being restored, Mary is a Catholic.

ELIZABETH
As I am aware. Very well. It is in my best interest to show support for my sister , but I will also show mine own strength. Prepare for my travel to London. I want no less than 2,000 men dressed in the livery of my grandfather in my party when I arrive.

THOMAS PARRY
Of course, milady, it will be done.

Parry goes to leave.

ELIZABETH
And Thomas.

Parry stops.

THOMAS PARRY

Yes, milady.

ELIZABETH

Thank you for your loyalty. Tell Cecil the same.

THOMAS PARRY

Of course, milady.

He exits.

KAT ASHLEY

Do you really think it wise to challenge Mary?

ELIZABETH

2,000 isn't enough to present a challenge. It is, however, enough to show her that I, myself, am not without support in this country.

KAT ASHLEY

I don't think you need an army to prove that, milady.

ELIZABETH

My sister is a Catholic. I am the fruit of her mother's downfall. I have no doubt she holds that against me and believe me when I say I have no intention of being treated as the bastard as such I am sure I am seen by her and her supporters. This is not a challenge, but a demand of respect and as heir presumptive, to such respect I am entitled. I have watched and waited and now it is time I move. And this is my move.

KAT ASHLEY

Then you have my full support, milady.

Elizabeth gives Kat a fond look.

ELIZABETH

I know, Kat. And for it I am grateful. Now come. We must prepare for travel to London and into the mouth of uncertainty.

Kat bows to Elizabeth and follows her off.

Scene I.V

Elizabeth and Mary I sit in a room by themselves playing cards.

They play in silence for some time. The tension is very tense.

Mary I plays her hand. Elizabeth folds.

MARY I
I hope you will attend Mass with me today.

ELIZABETH
I have every intention of attending.

MARY I
But?

ELIZABETH
But I have not felt well today. I do not think I have the stamina to attend. My physician says I must rest.

MARY I
Yet here you sit playing games with me.

ELIZABETH
I thought it best if I appeared to you in person, my queen.

MARY I
Have you been ill every day these past weeks? Or do you simply mean to defy your sister and sovereign.

Elizabeth loses control and starts to weep. She throws herself on her sister's lap.

ELIZABETH
Please, dear sister, I beg you. If all were taken from me but one truth it is my faith. My faith has kept me alive and sane these last few years. Please, you must understand. You must sympathize. Just as your faith is important to you, as is mine to me.

MARY I
Your faith is the faith of heretics and whores. It is not right and true.

ELIZABETH
Teach me, then. I know so little about Mass and proper Catholic practices. Please teach me, so that I may no longer be in defiance of your wishes.

MARY I
(triumphant)
Very well. Teach you I shall, you poor misguided creature. You will attend the next Mass with me. Now go. Your physician says you need rest.

ELIZABETH
Thank you, dear sister. I am indebted to you.

Elizabeth smiles to herself as she leaves the room.

Scene II

Elizabeth sits alone in a sitting room. MARY enters looking very pregnant.

Elizabeth stands to meet her sister's gaze as she enters.

She bows slowly, but keeps her eyes locked on to her sister's.

Mary relaxes a little, but is visibly annoyed by Elizabeth's arrogance.

After a tense silence, Mary speaks.

MARY I

How is Woodstock?

ELIZABETH

Old.

MARY I

Hm.

ELIZABETH

But, it beats the Tower.

Mary shoots her sister a look.

ELIZABETH

I do appreciate you allowing me to maintain my own staff, dear sister. It does make the confines of my prison feel a little more like a home.

MARY I

You look well. Much better than when you were in the Tower.

ELIZABETH

Wrongful imprisonment does have a negative effect on one's health.

MARY I

Wrongful? You conspired with Wyatt to have me deposed and yet, you stand here and accuse me of wrongfully imprisoning you? Let me remind you that although you no longer sleep in the Tower, you are still my prisoner.

ELIZABETH

Ah, but I am a prisoner who pays for her own house and staff. I'm sure that must count for something?

MARY I

You are a traitor.

ELIZABETH

I am innocent of conspiracy.

MARY I

You are not! I know it. You are sneaky, but you cannot hide the truth from me.

ELIZABETH

I am innocent of conspiracy.

MARY I

You cannot fool me the same way you fooled the Renaud.

ELIZABETH

I fooled no one. Renaud simply realized the truth. There is no evidence of my supposed involvement with Wyatt and until I am proven guilty, I am innocent of conspiracy.

Mary fumes, but doesn't respond.

ELIZABETH

When are you due?

Mary shoots Elizabeth a dangerous look.

MARY I

You are playing a dangerous game, bastard.

ELIZABETH

There is no child, is there?

MARY I

(Hissing)

There is indeed a child.

ELIZABETH

Is Phillip surprised?

MARY I

Surprised by what?

ELIZABETH

Surprised that his wife is two months overdue and still he is no closer to having an heir?

Mary starts to wail.

MARY I

Traitor! Child! Fool! I've granted you freedom from the Tower and this is how you repay me? By taunting me? Bringing me nothing but despair? You are nothing! I am queen and you are but my bastard little sister. You will get your due, little sister, I swear it.

Mary crumples to the ground.

Elizabeth switches gears and rushes to her sister.

ELIZABETH

Your majesty! Are you hurt? Dear sister, believe me, I meant no harm or disrespect. You are, of course, my sovereign and I am a faithful Englishman.

Mary pushes her sister away and quickly stands.

MARY I

Get out of my sight.

ELIZABETH

Of course, my Queen.

She calmly walks to the door. Before she exits, she pauses and turns back to Mary.

ELIZABETH

And sister? Congratulations on your coming heir.

She bows deeply and exits.

Mary watches her leave. Once she is gone, she cries.

Scene III

Elizabeth sits in her study with her tutor, ROGER ASCHAM. He reads from parchment as she works on another one of her Latin double translations.

ROGER

Maybe I should give you more challenging material. Everything you give me is absolutely perfect.

ELIZABETH

I've been translating Latin for as long as I can remember, it hardly challenges me. At this point, it serves more as a game.

ROGER

Well, nevertheless, it is a game at which you excel.

A PAGE enters carrying a LETTER.

PAGE

Pardon the interruption, milady, but I have an urgent letter from the Queen.

Elizabeth scoffs as she takes the letter.

ELIZABETH

Which member of my household is she going to arrest this time? She should no by now that if I were involved in any plot she would have found evidence. God knows she's looked hard enough.

She motions for the page to leave.
I will summon you once my response is prepared.

The page bows and quickly exits.

Elizabeth reads the letter. When she finishes she laughs.

ELIZABETH

(Handing Roger the letter)

Read this.

Roger reads the letter and then gives Elizabeth a confused look.

ROGER

I don't understand.

ELIZABETH

She's dying.

ROGER

Dying? What brings you to that conclusion?

ELIZABETH

Her health has been in constant decline since her faux pregnancy and she can't produce an heir, which means Phillip can't produce an heir either. And now she writes me at Phillips behest and insists I marry Savoy, one of his Spanish pawns. He knows I will succeed Mary when she goes and he wants me wed Spanish in order to keep England from a French alliance, as France is currently at war with the Habsburgs. Phillip is trying to play long game, because his wife, and with her his insurance of Spain's alliance with England, is dying.

Roger chuckles softly.

ROGER

Do I really have anything left to teach you?

Elizabeth laughs.

ELIZABETH

One can never be finished learning.

ROGER

How will you respond?

Elizabeth thinks for a moment.

ELIZABETH

I will decline. I will not become a pawn to Phillip as my sister has. Moreover, I've never met this Savoy. What if he is hideous or smells of piss.

They laugh.

Elizabeth quickly drafts her letter and seals it.

She hands it to Roger.

Give this to the pageboy and tell him to make haste. I want this letter to get to Mary before she dies.

ROGER

As you wish.

He gives a curt bow and goes to exit.

ELIZABETH

And send Parry to me.

Elizabeth chuckles to herself.

ELIZABETH

Telling me who to marry. She doesn't know me at all.

She chuckles again as she resumes working on her translation.

After a short time, there is a knock on the door followed by Thomas Parry entering the room.

He bows to her.

THOMAS PARRY

You wanted to see me?

ELIZABETH

I need an army. I believe my sister to be not long for this world and I need to be prepared in case force is necessary in asserting my right to the throne.

THOMAS PARRY

I'll make the arrangements.

ELIZABETH

As always, discretion is of utmost importance. I cannot be implicated until the time comes which the army is required.

THOMAS PARRY

It shall be done, milady.

She nods to him. He bows and exits.

She turns back to her translation and takes a breath.

ELIZABETH

Here we go.

Scene IV

Elizabeth paces in her study at Hatfield. Kat Ashley watches her anxiously.

KAT ASHLEY

Will you give it a rest? You're making me nervous.

Elizabeth stops and looks at her.

ELIZABETH

You nervous? Imagine how I feel.

KAT ASHLEY

I'm sorry, milady, but we all know the queen's going to die. She's been ill for weeks, I don't know what's got you so riled up.

ELIZABETH

It is not Mary's impending death that is bothering me, but what comes after.

KAT ASHLEY

What do you mean? You'll be queen, that's what comes after.

ELIZABETH

Is it? Or will I be forced to take the throne by force as Mary herself was.

They are silent for a moment.

I don't want my ascension to be characterized by bloodshed as my sister's reign was. I want to unite this country, not tear it apart.

Thomas Parry rushes in.

THOMAS PARRY
Milady, the queen is dead.

ELIZABETH
And?

THOMAS PARRY
And the reception is better than we could have imagined.

Elizabeth laughs and hugs Kat.
I've made arrangements for you to leave as soon as you are ready. It will take time to get to London, however, as the streets are practically overflowing in celebration.

ELIZABETH
Then we have no time to waste! Kat, make sure my belongings are ready for travel.

KAT ASHLEY
Of course, Your Majesty. Long live the Queen!

She exits like a ball of joy.

Parry bows deeply to the new queen.

THOMAS PARRY
Long live the queen.

He exits.

Elizabeth smiles and then laughs to herself.

ELIZABETH
Long live the queen indeed.

She looks over her desk out the window, beams, and then leaves the room with a striking presence about her.

Scene V

Elizabeth sits in her privy chamber playing cards with her ladies maids. Elizabeth is rowdier than the rest of them, but they all play the game with high spirits.

There is a knock at the door and Kat Ashley goes to answer. She runs back to Elizabeth in excitement and whispers in her ear.

Elizabeth gasps in delight.

ELIZABETH

Go on then, let him in!

Kat returns to the door and leads ROBERT DUDLEY into the room.

He and Elizabeth smile at each other. There is tension.

Elizabeth breaks her trance and waves her ladies maids out of the room.

They hastily exit, leaving Elizabeth and Dudley alone.

ELIZABETH

It's been so long.

Dudley moves to embrace her.

She playfully stops him with her hand.

I am the queen now. You can't touch a monarch without their consent.

DUDLEY

Then, your majesty, may I touch the queen?

ELIZABETH

(coy)

Well, that depends. What are your intentions with said touch?

DUDLEY

(playing off her)

To great an old friend.

ELIZABETH

An old friend? Is that all I am to you? An old friend?

DUDLEY

Well, what would you rather I say?

ELIZABETH

I would have rather you greeted me with more enthusiasm than an "old friend."

DUDLEY

Fine. I see the sun in your eyes. The fire in your hair brings nothing but fire to mine heart. Is that better?

ELIZABETH

(probably blushing)

No. The first attempt killed the mood.

She playfully turns from him.

He doesn't really know what to do.

He approaches her slowly.

DUDLEY

(over her shoulder)

Might I embrace the most beautiful and powerful woman in England?

ELIZABETH

(smirking)

Oh, very well.

They embrace for a long moment.

DUDLEY

We made it Bess. We survived.

ELIZABETH

(releasing a tense laugh)

Barely. My sister almost had us both.

DUDLEY

She had us both. It's a miracle we were able to survive her tyranny.

ELIZABETH

(exiting the embrace)

Nonsense. You give my half-sister too much credit. They never had the evidence to support her imprisonment of either of us. All she had were speculation and family bonds. Weak claims at best.

DUDLEY

Maybe so, but I can't imagine you were this nonchalant in prison.

Elizabeth huffs.

ELIZABETH

Huh. And you would know all about my prison behavior.

DUDLEY

Well, no, but the guards did talk in the Tower. They say you refused to eat, even before you reached London. They say you were frail and weak in body, but your mind and spirit as sharp as ever.

Elizabeth was skeptical of where this story was headed, but she's warming up to it.

Yes, I even heard that, despite impossible circumstances and unknowable outcomes, the only words you would say were "I am innocent of conspiracy."

Elizabeth gives him a playful look.

ELIZABETH

What else did you expect from the most powerful woman in the country?

Dudley steps closer to Elizabeth.

DUDLEY

May I touch the queen?

Elizabeth initiates an embrace, answering his question.

They stay there for a little, before Dudley pulls away.

DUDLEY

Have you thought more about what the propositions of the council?

ELIZABETH

There's always something with you.

DUDLEY

Bess, it's a serious issue.

ELIZABETH

I will not discuss marriage.

DUDLEY

Not even to/

ELIZABETH

/Especially not to Phillip of Spain. I will not Katherine of Aragon myself. It is beneath me. Plus, I've met Phillip. I will not be his submissive Catholic bitch. He won't walk all over me like he did Mary.

DUDLEY

What about another suitor. Someone English with a decent rapport with the people. A nobleman from the privy council, perhaps.

ELIZABETH

And just who did you from my privy council do you expect me to marry? Cecil? HA!

DUDLEY

Me.

Elizabeth laughs, but then realizes he's serious.

ELIZABETH

You?

DUDLEY

Why not me?

ELIZABETH

Dudley, I am a prince. You are not. It has never been done before and it cannot be done now.

DUDLEY

Bess, at least consider/

ELIZABETH

No. I am finished with this conversation.

DUDLEY

Bess/

ELIZABETH

/You are dismissed.

Dudley is stunned for a moment, but ultimately accepts.

He bows to her, but she isn't looking.

DUDLEY

As you wish, my Bess.

Elizabeth sinks back into her card chair and pouts.

ELIZABETH

Damn!

Scene VI

Elizabeth and her privy council are

meeting. Elizabeth sits at the head of the table, either angry or disinterested. WILLIAM CECIL stands to address the group.

CECIL

It is time we discuss the matter of her majesty's marriage.

ELIZABETH

Why? What is so pressing about my being married that it needs to be discussed now.

CECIL

Your majesty, the country has had too many bouts over succession of late. The quicker you secure an heir, the easier the country will rest. There are, after all, no Tudors after yourself.

ELIZABETH

I am not yet thirty! You expect me to die so soon?

CECIL

With all due respect, your brother died at 15.

ELIZABETH

My brother was sickly and weak. I am not. I will not discuss it further.

CECIL

Your majesty.

ELIZABETH

I said I will not discuss it.

CECIL

You must at least look at the suitors.

DUDLEY

She said no, Cecil. Are you so bold as to go against the direct wishes of our queen?

CECIL

I was sworn to advise the queen how I see fit, even if the advice was unpleasant to her ear.

DUDLEY

Unpleasant is an understatement, I would say.

ELIZABETH

Enough Dudley! Do you not think me capable of speaking for myself? I am more than capable of defending my own position.

After a tense pause, Dudley sits down.

CECIL

You must at least hear the offers.

ELIZABETH

Fine. But know that I will make no decision today.

CECIL

The first offer, of course, is from Phillip II of Spain.

ELIZABETH

Except that decision. It's a no. Tell him no. Nicely, of course.

CECIL

I assumed so. There are several others who would provide lucrative and advantageous political alliances both for yourself and for England.

ELIZABETH

Well, go on then, don't make this last longer than it must.

CECIL

Right. The next prospect is Erik of Sweden. A protestant heir to the throne will provide England with a continental ally, since your rejection of Phillip will no doubt make our Spanish relations/

ELIZABETH

/who else, Cecil? Just give me a list.

CECIL

Of course. The next most promising are Charles Francis of Austria and Sir William Pickering.

ELIZABETH

Is that it?

CECIL

No, but those are the most promising/

ELIZABETH

/Excellent. That is all I want to hear of it.

She stands.

Is there any more pressing business that needs your queen's ear?

CECIL

As a matter of fact/

ELIZABETH

/Excellent. We are adjourned.

She exits hastily as all the men of the council rush to a standing position.

The men file, confused, out of the chamber, leaving only Cecil and Dudley.

They look at each other knowingly.

DUDLEY

I can't make her do something she doesn't want to do.

CECIL

Dudley, she must make a decision! She can't keep dodging the subject. The country needs to know it's future is secure.

DUDLEY

I can talk to her, Cecil. That's all I can promise.

CECIL

Then by all means, please do.

They bid each other farewell nods and exit the chamber.

Scene VII

Elizabeth sits in her study hastily working on double translations. Dudley knocks on the door s he enters the room.

DUDLEY

Bess...

ELIZABETH

I will not discuss it.

DUDLEY

Bess, you need to confront marriage sooner or later.

ELIZABETH

Why? Why must that be the first thing I choose in my reign? Does my own council not trust me to rule in my own right?

DUDLEY

It's safe! Marriage will keep your line secure. It will keep the country secure.

ELIZABETH

What proof have you of this? My father married six ties and his line is as turbulent as the Plantagents! My sister married and she spent four years as a pawn of Spain and the

pope before she died. I have half a mind not to marry at all.

DUDLEY

Then marry someone you trust. Someone who you know will support you and not try to undermine you.

ELIZABETH

Like you? Is that where this is going?

Dudley doesn't speak.

I will hear no more of marriage today.

DUDLEY

Bess/

ELIZABETH

/No more.

They stay silent for a short period.

Elizabeth doesn't look at Dudley, but she also doesn't resume her translations.

DUDLEY

May I hold the queen?

Elizabeth relents and rises.

Dudley hugs her from behind. They stay like this for a bit.

ELIZABETH

Why must I constantly be lectured by men who no nothing of me, Dudley.

DUDLEY

(chuckles)

I suppose that's the job.

ELIZABETH

(chuckles with him)

I suppose your right.

They chuckle for a couple seconds.

England is a mess.

The two laugh together for a little bit.

I'll hear the suitors out, but I won't make any decisions. I suppose I can't put it off forever.

DUDLEY

I think that's a very wise decision.

ELIZABETH

Mhm. Mind yourself, I may yet change my decision.

DUDLEY

Because of silly old me?

Elizabeth laughs boldly.

She leaves the embrace and turns to face him.

ELIZABETH

I must return to my translations.

DUDLEY

Are they that pressing?

ELIZABETH

More pressing than marriage, I'm afraid.

DUDLEY

(chuckling)

Very well, then. I'll take my leave.

He turns to leave.

ELIZABETH

Dudley.

DUDLEY

Yes, Bess?

ELIZABETH

Visit me later. I enjoy your company.

DUDLEY

(bowing)

Until later, my queen.

Scene VIII

Elizabeth and Cecil sit at a small table playing cards.

ELIZABETH

And that, my friend, is my victory.

CECIL

(chuckling)

Once again, my queen, you've beaten me.

ELIZABETH

I hope you aren't just letting me win.

CECIL

I've beaten you many times before.

ELIZABETH

It's different today. In the time it usually takes us to complete 2 matches, I've beaten you in five.

CECIL

I suppose I'm just having an off day.

ELIZABETH

You're distracted, Cecil. What news is it that I don't want to hear?

CECIL

Right to the point, I see.

Elizabeth gives a pointed look.

Yes, well, we've just received word that your cousin, Mary, has returned to Scotland to assume her throne.

ELIZABETH

I thought she was in France.

CECIL

She recently became a widow.

ELIZABETH

Hm

CECIL

What are you thinking.

ELIZABETH

She'll need our help to keep her throne.

CECIL

I fear she has a different opportunity that may seem more enticing.

ELIZABETH

Like what?

CECIL

She's a direct descendant of your grandfather and she is a Catholic. And since there are some Catholics in this country who still see you as/

ELIZABETH

/If you say bastard, I will have you banished.

CECIL

Of course you aren't, but there are those who reject your sovereignty.

ELIZABETH

Those people are nothing but mindless slaves to the Pope.

CECIL

While I agree, I think we need to be careful when interacting with her.

ELIZABETH

What do you suggest?

CECIL

Perhaps the best course of action is to gain the indisputable advantage. Make sure the people who don't trust you have no choice.

ELIZABETH

Don't dodge, Cecil.

CECIL

You need to be married.

ELIZABETH

I am sick and tired of being told I must marry. Who am I to wed? Any Englishman will treat the marriage as a transition of power to his family and any foreigner will either ensure the English public sees me as nothing more than a puppet, like my sister, or they are Catholic and that would make the majority of the population would have a fit!

CECIL

There's always Dudley.

ELIZABETH

Cecil, I can't marry Dudley.

CECIL

Why not? He's an English noble, a Protestant, and you obviously share a bond.

ELIZABETH

I will not marry Dudley.

CECIL

You changed your response, my queen.

ELIZABETH

(dodging)

I did no such thing.

CECIL

You first said you can't marry him and now you say you won't marry him. As your advisor, I must ask which one is most true.

ELIZABETH

He isn't royalty. The court doesn't trust him. It will look like he's only courting me for the power.

CECIL

Would they be correct?

ELIZABETH

Does it matter?

CECIL

I think it does.

ELIZABETH

Not to the people.

They are quiet for a moment.

I suppose my other option is to have her married.

CECIL

You wish to arrange your cousin's marriage?

ELIZABETH

I want to marry her to someone in court. Somebody English with unwavering loyalty to the crown.

CECIL

Who do you suggest?

ELIZABETH

...Dudley.

CECIL

Dudley?

ELIZABETH

He would do anything for me. He is completely devoted.

CECIL

Are you sure you want him permanently by the side of another woman?

ELIZABETH

I've made up my mind, Cecil. It's the best decision to make.

CECIL

Very well. I'll inform the privy council.

ELIZABETH

Let me tell Dudley first.

CECIL

Very well. I'll let you address the council.

ELIZABETH

Thank you.

Cecil nods his head to her before moving to stand.

Cecil.

He stops.

She starts dealing the cards and smirks at him.

One more round before you go.

Cecil chuckles and sits back down at the table.

Scene VIII

Elizabeth and Dudley stroll through the gardens quietly, arm in arm. At some point, Dudley makes an awkward noise and dodges something in the path. He then shoots a glare towards the DUCKS by the fountain.

DUDLEY

I hate ducks. They always shit in my way.

ELIZABETH

Oh, come off it Robert. They don't know any better.

DUDLEY

Why can't they just do it in the grass?

ELIZABETH

Why can't you just watch where you're going?

DUDLEY

Don't turn this into a lecture, Bess.

ELIZABETH

(coy)

A lecture? Me? I would never.

DUDLEY

Of course, you wouldn't. Why did you want to see me?

ELIZABETH

I wanted to spend time with you.

DUDLEY

And...

ELIZABETH

And? What do you mean and?

DUDLEY

you're acting dodgy. There's always an ulterior motive when you're acting dodgy.

ELIZABETH

I don't remember having an ulterior motive yesterday when I saw you. Or the day before.

DUDLEY

There you go again, dodging the question.

ELIZABETH

Fine. You know me too well.

DUDLEY

So why did you summon me?

ELIZABETH

I want you to marry the Queen of Scots.

Dudley stops and stares at Elizabeth.

DUDLEY

I know you don't want to marry me, but you don't have to send me to Scotland/ you've made your point.

ELIZABETH

/I don't not want to marry you, Robert.

DUDLEY

Then why don't you?

ELIZABETH

I cannot marry you.

DUDLEY

Bess...

ELIZABETH

I need someone with undying loyalty to myself and the crown married to my cousin to keep Scotland within our circle.

DUDLEY

I don't want to marry the Scottish queen.

ELIZABETH

You are the only person I trust enough to be in this position.

DUDLEY

Bess, you would send me away? If I were to become consort, I couldn't just return to you whenever I please.

ELIZABETH

This is my best bet to keep her at bay!

DUDLEY

Keep her at bay? Didn't she just get to Scotland?

ELIZABETH

She's a Catholic descendant of my grandfather. The some of the Catholics of this country`still regard me as...illegitimate.

DUDLEY

But how do you know her intentions are malicious? She hasn't even written to you yet, has she?

ELIZABETH

No, but Cecil thinks/

DUDLEY

/Frankly, I don't care what Cecil thinks.

ELIZABETH

Well, I do.

DUDLEY

Do I not get a say in deciding who I marry?

ELIZABETH

Not unless you want to end up back in the Tower.

DUDLEY

I don't think you could put me there.

ELIZABETH

Why are you being so belligerent. I asked you to do one thing for me.

DUDLEY

You asked me to leave you and marry a woman I don't love!

ELIZABETH

We don't all get to marry for love. That's not the reality of nobility.

DUDLEY

Some of us don't get to marry at all.

ELIZABETH

Was that a slight?

DUDLEY

An observation.

ELIZABETH

Tread lightly.

DUDLEY

I don't want to leave you.

ELIZABETH

This isn't any easier for me. You know how I feel, but I cannot risk another Tudor power struggle. Not with the sheer volume of Tudor power struggles this country has had to endure in recent years.

DUDLEY

I respect that, but if you were married to an Englishman, maybe the threat of being viewed as illegitimate wouldn't be so prominent.

ELIZABETH

That's what Cecil said.

DUDLEY

I've half a mind to take it back.

ELIZABETH

But who would you have me marry.

DUDLEY

Me, Bess, you know the answer is me.

ELIZABETH

And you know that you are not royalty. I cannot marry you and I doubt you want me with anyone else.

DUDLEY

I want you to be happy. You are happy with me. I can see it.

ELIZABETH

If you want to make me happy, then marry the Queen of Scots.

Dudley is silent for a moment.

DUDLEY

Is that it?

ELIZABETH

I'm not changing my mind. I'll present the plan to the privy council when the opportunity presents itself but until then, I just want you to be prepared.

Dudley takes Elizabeth's arm and they continue walking.

DUDLEY

Then we might as well make the most of what little time we have left.

They continue their walk offstage
in a tense silence.

Scene IX

Elizabeth sits at a desk Stage
Right. Cecil and Dudley stand on
either side of her, looking on as
she finishes writing a LETTER.

ELIZABETH

(handing it to Cecil)

How's this?

CECIL

Very nicely done.

DUDLEY

Let me see.

CECIL

(withholding the letter)

The Master of Horse doesn't read the queen's correspondence.

DUDLEY

(trying to grab it)

It's about my marriage.

CECIL

(losing)

You already know what it says, then.

ELIZABETH

Children...

Dudley takes the moment to finally
free the letter from Cecil.

Cecil watches him read it.

DUDLEY

(handing the letter back to Elizabeth)

Very well done, Bess.

Elizabeth swipes the letter and
hands it to Cecil.

CECIL

I'll send it right away.

He exits to send the letter.

Lights come up on MARY STUART and the FOUR MARYS on Stage Left.

Mary sits at a desk reading a letter while the four Marys stand behind her, each in a FIERCE bevel.

MARY STUART
(cackling)

AH! I cannot!

MARY FLEMING
Omigod what?

MARY STUART
I just got a letter from my cousin, the Queen of England.

MARY BEATON
Bitch, no way.

MARY LIVINGSTON
Spill!

MARY SETON
What's England?

They take a hot second to glare at Mary Seton.

MARY FLEMING
Well, don't leave us in suspense!

MARY STUART
Ok, listen to this.

She stands and adopts a mocking stance.

"My dearest cousin. Firstly, you have my deepest condolences regarding the passing of your late husband. I understand this transition period may be very difficult for you as an unwed, female monarch. For this reason, I propose my favourite, Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, to be your husband. Should you wed him, England and I would be happy to help protect you and Scotland. Your marriage would ensure a safe and stable relationship between our two nations. Give it a ponder and get back to me as soon as you can. Your beloved cousin, Elizabeth I."

MARY BEATON
Girl, is that really what it says?

MARY STUART
Eh, more or less.

MARY FLEMING

So, wait, did she just offer you aid and protection?

MARY STUART

Only if I marry her favourite.

MARY LIVINGSTON

Oh, so she's offering help AND you get to steal her man?
Sweetie, I call that a win.

MARY STUART

I do not want her favourite! She is trying to keep me under her thumb.

MARY BEATON

So, what does that mean for you?

MARY SETON

Oh! I know this one!

Mary Fleming rolls her eyes. She knows a stupid answer is on the way.

It means Elizabeth is mean.

Mary Fleming was correct.

MARY STUART

No. It means she sees me as a threat.

MARY FLEMING

I haven't decided if I think that's a good position or a very, very dangerous position.

MARY BEATON

I think both.

MARY STUART

Both indeed. Alright, girls, now I must reply.

The four Mary's gather closer as Mary Stuart prepares to write her response.

"My beloved cousin, dear friend, and jaded, coldhearted snake."

MARY SETON

I don't like snakes.

MARY BEATON

Girl, you can't send that.

MARY SETON

Wait, what's a snake?

They ignore that one.

MARY STUART

"My dearest cousin. I accept and appreciate your condolences, but would remind you that I am not the only one of us in a predicament. As it stands, you are unwed and have produced no heir for England. I would be honored to marry your favourite, so long as you name me heir to your throne."

How is that?

MARY FLEMING

I say shorten it.

MARY STUART

Fine. What about this?

"My dearest cousin. I will happily marry your favourite, but only if you name me England's heir. Kisses, Cousin Mary."

MARY LIVINGSTON

Is that really what you wrote?

MARY STUART

Eh, more or less.

MARY BEATON

Ok, bitch, send that shit out and stir the fucking pot! I'm so excited.

MARY SETON

Ew, Mary. Shit in a pot? Nasty.

Mary Fleming rolls her eyes as Mary Stuart hands her the letter. Mary Fleming leaves in the same style as Cecil.

Lights down on the Scotland side of the stage as lights come back up in England.

Elizabeth paces in front of her desk as Cecil and Dudley watch on.

ELIZABETH

Heir? Who does she think she is trying to make herself my heir? She's been on this continent for all of two seconds and already she makes a play for the English crown. The nerve. She might as well have spit in my face.

DUDLEY

I thought the letter had a rather pleasant undertone.

ELIZABETH

Pleasant?! Can you not read? She may as well have just called me a jaded snaked!

DUDLEY

I'm trying to find the benefit of the doubt. I am the one marrying her, after all.

CECIL

I hate to be the bearer of bad news, but judging by the tone of that letter and the nature of her request, that doesn't seem likely.

ELIZABETH

How am I supposed to respond to that?

CECIL

I say take the high road. Reaffirm your devotion as cousins and push the marriage once more.

DUDLEY

I say war. She's a Catholic. The Pope is probably already scheming ways to have you replaced.

ELIZABETH

War over a letter? Do you take me for a fool?

DUDLEY

I really don't want to marry her.

ELIZABETH

Cousins it is.

She sits at her desk and begins to write.

"Dear Mary, you pompous, presumptuous swine."

CECIL

Your majesty...

ELIZABETH

Too much?

DUDLEY

Maybe a tad light, actually.

ELIZABETH

"My dearest cousin. I will not be naming an heir at this time, but I do politely insist that you indeed marry my favourite, Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester. I believe it will benefit both our kingdoms if we love and respect each other as family and as sister monarchs. Your beloved cousin, Elizabeth I."

CECIL
I think that sounds lovely.

DUDLEY
Is that really what you wrote?

ELIZABETH
Well, more or less.

CECIL
I'll send it right away.

As he takes the letter, Elizabeth
erupts into a coughing fit.

Cecil and Dudley look at her
warily.

DUDLEY
Do you maybe want to reconsider the whole heir thing?

ELIZABETH
(glaring)
Oh come off it. It's just a tickle.

Cecil exits and the lights take us
back to Scotland.

Mary Stuart and Marys Fleming,
Beaton, and Livingston are
gossiping and giggling.

Mary Seton comes in with a letter.
She holds it proudly in the air,
but says nothing.

MARY LIVINGSTON
Something we should know?

MARY SETON
A letter!

They wait for her to tell them who
sent the letter. Girl, Mary Seton
doesn't remember, are you kidding?

MARY FLEMING
Well? From whom did the queen receive a letter.

MARY SETON
No, silly. The queen sent the letter. Mary received it.

MARY BEATON
Omigod bitch, it's Elizabeth.

MARY STUART

Hand it over!

She takes the letter and reads it to herself.

Oh, what a kiss-ass. She basically just said "Hm. How about we still do my thing, but none of your things. Just my thing. Or war."

MARY BEATON

No way.

MARY STUART

You girls look for yourselves.

She hands the letter to Mary Fleming. The Marys read it silently over Fleming's shoulder.

MARY LIVINGSTON

Wait, where is the war part?

MARY SETON

Yeah, this actually sounds really nice.

MARY STUART

Ugh. Subtext!

MARY SETON

It's such a shame, too. The guy who gave me the letter said she was sick. But she was so nice.

MARY STUART

Sick?

MARY SETON

Yeah. He said she had to wear this big, ugly bag on her head so people wouldn't see her bloated pimples. And they said she hasn't left her room in, like, days.

MARY STUART

Did he tell you what the name of the ailment was?

MARY SETON

No. We didn't talk about ale.

(she does that thing people do when they cover half of their mouth so people can't see them whisper)

He was on the job.

(speaking normally)

He only told me that her sick was smallbox.

MARY FLEMING

You mean smallpox?

MARY SETON

No, I'm pretty sure it was box.

MARY BEATON

Girl, I don't give a shit what it is. She's sick!

MARY LIVINGSTON

Truly an outstanding turn of events. Henry's kids just can't stay healthy, can they?

MARY FLEMING

Wait a minute. She isn't married yet, is she?

MARY BEATON

(gossip gasp)

Bitch.

MARY LIVINGSTON

Oh, honey, God really said Scottish Queen of England.

MARY SETON

Wait, why isn't she married?

MARY FLEMING

She's a paranoid prude. That's why.

MARY STUART

(smug)

Well. Time to write back.

The girls laugh as Mary quickly drafts a letter.

Ok. "My dearest cousin. Cordial, cordial, nice, nice, unimportant, and here we go: We are happy to grant your request and marry your favourite should you name us heir. We do not presume to make a play at your throne as rumor says you may think and we wish you nothing but a long, happy, and prosperous life, void of all sickness or ailment. Love and admiration, your dearest cousin Mary." Or something like that.

MARY BEATON

I love that.

MARY FLEMING

I'll send it straight away.

Back to England. You know the drill.

Elizabeth sits in her bed as she reads the letter. She is dressed as someone who has smallpox, but also money.

Only Dudley is with her in her bedchamber.

He lays next to her on her bed.

She lets out a screech.

ELIZABETH

That cheeky whore. Who told her I was sick!?

DUDLEY

What?

ELIZABETH

Read this.

She gives the letter to Dudley, which he reads.

DUDLEY

Pardon me, but hot damn.

ELIZABETH

That sneaky bitch thinks I'm going to die.

DUDLEY

Well, how do you feel?

ELIZABETH

Angry!

DUDLEY

No. I mean physically.

ELIZABETH

I feel my entire body seethe with rage. I refuse to die, Dudley.

DUDLEY

I completely believe you'll pull through this, but I don't really think you can beat the pox just by force of will.

ELIZABETH

Just watch! I'm the Queen of England. I will do what I damn well please.

She tears up the letter.

And I will not have her take my throne from me!

DUDLEY

Well, we've certainly settled on that one, haven't we. Do you mean to reply?

ELIZABETH

Let Cecil draft a reply. I'm too angry. Don't have the ambassador and his company take it to her without my permission, though. I want to know what she is reading.

DUDLEY

And his company?

ELIZABETH

Oh yes. I was supposed to go visit her, you know, meet face to face, but I obviously cannot go, so I've instructed everyone to pretend I'm fine and not sick.

DUDLEY

Whatever works.

ELIZABETH

My thoughts exactly.

She waves Dudley away.

Now hurry up and go.

Dudley takes her hand and kisses it. They smile at each other and then Dudley leaves.

New Scene

Elizabeth I stands alone in the middle of an empty stage. She stares straight ahead and doesn't move for an uncomfortable period of time.

ELIZABETH

I'm dying. I have not slept in two weeks. I have not moved nor spoken in the last fifteen hours. Most would look at my actions and call me insane, but the truth is I simply am not ready to die. I am staring into the abyss and I'll be damned if I blink first.

I can feel it coming, though. The icy winds of death are drying out my eyes. Dramatic, isn't it. But, alas, it is not so. It feels empty. I feel empty. And yet, I cannot identify why. I am one of the most powerful people in the world, but I am missing something.

I'm slipping. Gloriana is losing her godhood. The first sign was Essex's sudden rise to fame. He barely saw combat and they touted him as their idol. He only went to war because I said he could go to war and yet, the people look to the

strong young man as their hero rather than the old queen. The old queen who has looked after this country her entire life. The old queen who gave up any shot she had at a happy and fulfilling life so that her subjects would love her. So they would be safe.

Oh, maybe that's it. I was given so many chances at happiness and I never seemed to have the ability to make it work. Something always came first. Stood in the way. First it was pride, then it was religion, and then treason. Yes. The "hero" of my little tiff in the Holland tried to raise a coup after his stunning failure in Ireland. It was unsuccessful, of course. He was popular, not powerful. And not nearly important enough to make level headed people forfeit their own lives for nothing. He was an idiot. An idiot that I funded.

They are correct when they say old age makes one foolish. I think it comes from the need to be young again. Although, as I think about it, I realize I would never choose to be young again. I was naive. Innocent. Optimistic. I was never stupid, however, and for that I am grateful.

Or maybe I was. In the realm of men, that is. Not all men, of course, I got rather good at getting what I wanted. But the one front I could never really conquer was romance. I never could make it happen. I am the queen who united a broken country. The queen who fought off scrutiny and scandal and doubt and the Pope! The queen who brought the mighty Spanish to their knees. Twice! Why couldn't I achieve happiness?

Oh well. Too late now. But I think I'll stand here just a bit longer. If only just to reminisce.

New Scene

Elizabeth and Dudley are in Elizabeth's study. She sits at her desk reading letters, while Dudley busies himself by fiddling with things.

Dudley purposefully drops things as an attempt to get Elizabeth's attention, but nothing works.

He sighs.

DUDLEY

You're boring.

ELIZABETH

I'm working.

DUDLEY

You're reading.

ELIZABETH

(looking at him)

I am busy being the Queen of England. If you want something to do, perhaps you can do your job as a member of the queen's privy council and council her.

DUDLEY

Fine, then, let me read the letters so I know of what you need council.

ELIZABETH

You cannot read the letters, they are addressed to the Queen.

DUDLEY

Then how am I to council you?

ELIZABETH

You may council me by answering what questions I have for you with complete honesty.

DUDLEY

But you haven't been asking me questions.

ELIZABETH

(turning to face him)

Then, I suppose your job is to wait patiently and silently until I do.

Dudley gives her that "oh, cute, I see what you did there" look before flopping down in the nearest chair.

DUDLEY

Hm. Cheeky.

Elizabeth chuckles to herself. She has won again.

It is silent for a hot second. Every once in a while, Dudley will let out a sigh or a loud breath.

Finally, the silence gets to him.

So, what did you think of/

ELIZABETH

(/holding up her hand to cut him off)

I have not asked you a question.

DUDLEY

Bess, please. I'm suffocating in nothingness over here.

Elizabeth considers, then gives him
a coy look.

ELIZABETH
(going back to her letters)
Fine. Speak away.

DUDLEY
What did you think of Kenilworth?

ELIZABETH
I thought it was magnificent. You truly did pull out all the
stops.

Dudley stands and goes to
Elizabeth. He leans on the back of
her chair.

DUDLEY
How did it make you feel?

Elizabeth blushes at the memory.

ELIZABETH
It made me feel...

The LETTER she is reading distracts
from her happiness.

The further she gets into the
letter, the darker her face gets.

Dudley can't see her face, but he
can feel her energy shift.

DUDLEY
(wary)
Bess?

ELIZABETH
(cold)
It would be wise not to invade the space of a queen.

Dudley makes an "oh shit" face as
he backs away from the chair.

DUDLEY
Bess, are you...

He is cut off by her crumpling up
the letter.

Dudley takes a couple more steps
back.

ELIZABETH
(hissing)

Her.

DUDLEY
Who?

ELIZABETH
Why did it have to be her?

DUDLEY
Bess, who/

ELIZABETH
/Do you think she is more beautiful than me?

Dudley realizes what is going on.

DUDLEY
No. Of course not, Bess, you are the most beautiful/

ELIZABETH
(yelling)
/Do not lie to your queen! It is treason!

DUDLEY
I have never lied to you.

ELIZABETH
No. Of course not. You just betrayed my trust by
impregnating that trollop! Did you think this would make me
jealous enough to finally marry you? Is that your game?

DUDLEY
No.

ELIZABETH
No? Is that all you have to say? You knew this would make me
angry. You knew I wouldn't approve of her, so you went off
and fucked her just to set me ablaze? Why would you do such
a stupid, reckless, selfish/

DUDLEY
/Selfish? Me? Bess, I love you. I turned Kenilworth into a
spectacle for you and you still wouldn't marry me. After all
I've done for you. After all that we've endured. I need
somebody in my life who doesn't keep pushing me away.

ELIZABETH
I do not push you away! I give you everything.

DUDLEY
You won't let me love you. You have solidified your position
as queen, you have squashed your competition in Scotland,
yet you still denied me your hand.

ELIZABETH

We have had this conversation. Amy/

DUDLEY

/those rumors are long dead, Bess.

ELIZABETH

Even so, my monarchy is at risk. You are not the most popular nobleman in this country and if I were to marry you/

DUDLEY

/It's too late anyway.

ELIZABETH

Excuse me?

DUDLEY

Lettice and I have already married.

Elizabeth is taken aback.

ELIZABETH

Then I am truly betrayed.

DUDLEY

Bess,

ELIZABETH

Get out.

Now, Dudley is taken aback. He is frozen.

GET OUT!

DUDLEY

Please, my love...

ELIZABETH

Do not dare mock me! You have made your choice. I don't want to see you. And I never want to see your wench in my court again. I am the queen. The only queen in England. The only sun that shines on this land. That woman is nothing! She is not my equal!

Elizabeth storms out of the room.
Dudley runs after her.

DUDLEY

Bess, please, she isn't trying to challenge you.
(calling after her)

Wait!

New Scene

Cecil and Elizabeth walk together

in the gardens of one of
Elizabeth's palaces.

They are in a good mood.

ELIZABETH

It feels as though, for the first time, I am in charge of my own life.

CECIL

I hate to say this, my queen, but you can hardly rest now. Now, you are going to be scrutinized more harshly than ever.

ELIZABETH

Don't ruin my good mood, Cecil. I just meant that I don't have to pretend to be loyal to some half sibling or brother in law about whom I could not care less.

CECIL

Ah, yes, but now you must contend with an entire kingdom. And that, your majesty, is an entirely different game.

ELIZABETH

That's why you're here Cecil. You're going to help me navigate the petty and fickle world of politics.

CECIL

It will be my pleasure, your majesty.

ELIZABETH

I know, Cecil. I can always count on you.

CECIL

Unfortunately, you can also count on me to be the bearer of bad news.

ELIZABETH

I'm not in the mood for bad news.

CECIL

We need to start thinking about your marriage.

ELIZABETH

Cecil. We are not in council at this moment and I will not discuss the matter unless I absolutely must.

CECIL

Very well, my queen. It is, however, pressing. We will have to discuss it soon.

ELIZABETH

Well, soon is not now. I do not want to hear any more of this today.

As you wish.

CECIL

They walk in silence for a moment,
before Cecil decides to try his
hand at humor.
Lovely weather we're having.

ELIZABETH
(friendly)
I get enough sass from Dudley. I don't need any from you.

CECIL
Be careful of that one.

ELIZABETH
Dudley? He's my oldest friend, Cecil, why would you say such
a thing?

CECIL
It's quite obvious that he wants your hand.

ELIZABETH
I'd have half a mind to accept him if he were not already
married.

CECIL
That brings me to another bit of bad news.

ELIZABETH
Cecil...

CECIL
Amy Dudley is dead.

ELIZABETH
Oh dear. Was she ill?

CECIL
She was found at the base of her staircase. It appears that
she fell.

ELIZABETH
Do not.

CECIL
Or was pushed.

ELIZABETH
Who would do that? She was not important or influential.

CECIL
She was the main obstacle on Dudley's route to you.

ELIZABETH
You cannot think Dudley did this.

Dudley meets them on the path.

DUDLEY
Dudley did what?

ELIZABETH
My friend, you have my deepest condolences.

DUDLEY
For what?

CECIL
You mean, you don't know?

ELIZABETH
I told you.

DUDLEY
Know what?

ELIZABETH
Your wife is dead.

Dudley isn't as affected by this as
he should be.

DUDLEY
I'm not sure what to say.

CECIL
Did you do it?

DUDLEY
What? No? I didn't even know she was sick.

ELIZABETH
He doesn't even know cause of death. Cecil let this
ridiculous accusation go.

DUDLEY
Wait a moment, how did my wife die?

CECIL
She was found at the bottom of a staircase.

ELIZABETH
Cecil is insinuating that you pushed her, which is
impossible given that you have been by my side since I names
you Master of Horse.

DUDLEY
How dare you? Do you mistrust me so much?

CECIL

I don't personally believe you had any hand in it, but I worry for the queen's reputation. There are already rumors surrounding the two of you and a scandal like this so early in her reign will rock the queen's entire tenure.

DUDLEY

This is ridiculous.

CECIL

There are those who will think you killed your wife so you could be free to marry the queen.

DUDLEY

Cecil, stop this madness/

ELIZABETH

/No. Cecil has a point.

DUDLEY

And what point is that?

ELIZABETH

Scandal brought the death of my mother and Catherine and unpopular public opinion plagued my sister until her death. I will not I cannot let myself fall into the same trap.

DUDLEY

All they have are rumors. Unless we marry, nothing will come from this.

CECIL

Leicester, you are too close to the queen. People notice. People have noticed.

DUDLEY

Bess, please tell him how ridiculous he sounds.

ELIZABETH

I think you should go.

DUDLEY

(taken aback)

What?

ELIZABETH

You cannot stay at court with the threat of such a scandal looming.

DUDLEY

Bess, I can't leave you. Not when you're still fighting for dominance in your own government.

ELIZABETH

Do not presume to tell me what dominance I do or do not hold. I am the queen. As queen, I cannot risk unfounded rumors undermining my sovereignty, when the Catholics of this country are already attempting the same thing.

DUDLEY

(under his breath)

Yes. Unfounded.

ELIZABETH

Do not mock me.

CECIL

Dudley, I think it would be best if you take your leave of court.

Dudley looks at Elizabeth expectantly.

ELIZABETH

I've made up my mind.

Dudley sighs, defeated.

CECIL

I'll have your transport made ready.

Cecil bows to the queen.

Your majesty.

Cecil exits.

ELIZABETH

This is just as hard for me.

Dudley scoffs quietly.

This is only temporary.

DUDLEY

It's pointless.

ELIZABETH

You know better than to mock my judgement. And do not try to make me believe that you disagree. You are smarter than that.

DUDLEY

We've had to fight for the last five years just to be breathing now and this is what it comes to. We can't even enjoy freedom.

ELIZABETH

I am a servant of this country. You are a servant to me.
Neither of us are free to act as we please.

They are silent for a moment.

DUDLEY

May I at least kiss the queen goodbye?

Elizabeth is hesitant, but extends
her hand.

Dudley kneels and kisses it.

ELIZABETH

And now, you leave. Travel safely, Dudley.

Dudley rises, takes one last look
at the queen, then leaves.

New Scene

Mary Stuart sits in a large chair
in her prison bedchamber, while the
four Marys lounge around the room.
Someone reads, someone knits, the
others just stare at nothing.

They all look bored.

MARY SETON

I want a pet horse.

MARY FLEMING

Ugh!

MARY STUART

This is so annoying!

MARY BEATON

Girl, tell me about it. Thinking up revenge schemes from
prison without trying to implicate you in them for fear that
you'll finally be executed for treason is tough.

MARY LIVINGSTON

Why are we even here? Didn't "Good Queen Bess" say she was
going to protect you?

MARY STUART

(gritting her teeth)

Not officially.

MARY BEATON

That hoe's just mad because she has no children and your son the next in line for the throne.

MARY SETON

At least she let us stay with you.

MARY BEATON

Oh yeah, ladies, I'm having the time of my life.

MARY FLEMING

Well, what are you going to do about it? We can't just stand here and take it.

MARY STUART

Of course not.

MARY LIVINGSTON

Open revolt obviously won't work.

MARY STUART

Not if I have no title, army, or freedom.

MARY BEATON

Don't, like, a lot of Catholics see you as the legitimate heir to the English throne, though?

MARY STUART

Not enough to make a difference. Besides, we know nobody.

MARY FLEMING

What are your other options?

MARY SETON

We can challenge her to ultimate checkers.

They all give her that "girl, you've gotta be kidding" look.

MARY BEATON/MARY STUART/MARY
FLEMING/MARY LIVINGSTON

What even is ultimate checkers?/Absolutely not/How are you still alive?/ Ugh!Dumbass!

MARY SETON

(shrinking)

Sorry.

MARY LIVINGSTON

What happened to all that "family has to stick together shit" that she used to preach?

MARY STUART

I married Henry instead of her boy toy, the Earl of Leicester, and I presume it just went downhill from there.

MARY FLEMING

I still can't believe she wanted him to marry you.

MARY STUART

She wanted to control me. She still does. But she failed.

MARY BEATON

She says from house arrest under which Elizabeth put her.

They all give her angry and pointed looks.

I'm just keeping it real.

MARY LIVINGSTON

Aren't they, like, high-key having sex?

MARY SETON

Dramaaaa

MARY BEATON

Bitch! I've got it. You can't, like, actually fight her, but you can stir the pot.

MARY STUART

What are you suggesting?

MARY BEATON

Miss thing, all we have to do is start up some old rumors and her popularity will tank.

MARY STUART

Intéressante.

MARY BEATON

Girl, why is she still single? Why hasn't she produced an heir? Does she not care about us? Oh no. She cares more about canoodling with her lover.

MARY FLEMING

The Catholics get mad again.

MARY LIVINGSTON

Boom! Mary Stuart is the new most popular woman in England.

MARY STUART

Sneaky, but that seems pretty ineffective.

MARY BEATON

Are you kidding? Drama works every time.

MARY FLEMING

Scotland is a shitshow and we are in prison. Drama won't get us free.

MARY BEATON

Oh come on. Your keeper is married to Bess of Hardwick. Next to Liz, she's like the most popular bitch in the country. I'm sure she can stir shit up.

MARY STUART

Does anyone have any better suggestion?

MARY SETON

We could always send coded messages to Catholic sympathists and hatch a plan to have the queen assassinated so that people will look to you in the power vacuum, because you're the next legitimate Tudor heir.

Girl has she been smart this whole time?

MARY STUART

Let's go with that one.

She pulls out paper and starts writing.

MARY BEATON

Can we spread gossip just for fun then?

MARY STUART

Fine. I will make sure my gossip reaches Bess of Hardwick.

MARY BEATON

Yes! Girls, there may be hope for us yet.

The girls giggle together as Mary schemes.

New Scene

Francis and Elizabeth sit in a sitting room enjoying afternoon tea.

Elizabeth is happy. So is Francis.

FRANCIS

My queen, I have so enjoyed this time with you. I feel reborn in your beauty every time I visit you.

ELIZABETH

(blushing)

Oh, Francis. You flatter me.

FRANCIS

I mean it. You make me very happy.

ELIZABETH

As do you.

They grab hands and chuckle for a moment, before Elizabeth pulls away.

But, I am plagued with insubordination. Many in my country and in my court do not feel it is right that I entertain the idea of marry you.

FRANCIS

It is because I am a Catholic. I understand.

ELIZABETH

Well, your being French isn't exactly helpful either, but I want you to know that I don't care what they think. I like the way you make me feel. Young. Beautiful. Wanted. And I don't care that you're Catholic or French. I just care that you feel the same way about me.

FRANCIS

Of course I do. You are like the Sun. Beautiful, bright, and radiant. Seeing you is like being awoken from a nightmare. Like the sunrise on the darkest of nights.

Elizabeth giggles.

BESS(OS)

My lord, the queen say nobody is to interrupt!

Dudley bursts through the door followed closely by Bess of Hardwick.

Elizabeth shoots out of her seat and holds Dudley in an epic stare.

Bess shrinks.

BESS

I'm so sorry, your majesty.

ELIZABETH

His indignation and lack of respect is not your fault. You may go.

BESS

Thank you, my queen.

She bows and heads for the exit.

At the door, she stops and turns back to Elizabeth.

BESS

(Knowingly and reassuringly)

And good luck.

She exits.

DUDLEY

You can't marry him.

ELIZABETH

(enraged)

You storm into my chambers, interrupt my private tea, and dare tell me what I can or cannot do?! Have you learned nothing about me?

DUDLEY

He isn't good for you.

ELIZABETH

You gave up your right to say what is good for me, remember? When you knocked up Lettice Knollys!

DUDLEY

For you as a queen. The people hate him. If you marry them, they'll see it as a slight to their values.

ELIZABETH

Fuck the people! I have sacrificed so much of myself to keep this country from going to shit. The least they can do allow me this small bit of happiness.

DUDLEY

Is that what you want? Cheap affirmation masquerading as "happiness" in exchange for the support of your entire country? You have no heirs, Bess. You are the perfect target for a coup and this marriage would be an easy first step on the route to ending up exactly like your cousin from Scotland.

Elizabeth slaps him hard. Francis is shook.

ELIZABETH

You are pathetic. If you can't have me nobody can. Is that right?

DUDLEY

You're being selfish, Bess. That's something a smart queen can't afford to do. Cecil agrees.

ELIZABETH

Don't bring Cecil into this! He is not here. He did not storm into my sitting room to do nothing, but cut me down. You are out of line.

FRANCIS

I agree with Elizabeth. I think you should leave now.

DUDLEY

I do not take orders from you.

ELIZABETH

GET OUT!

Dudley sizes her up, scoffs, then exits the room.

FRANCIS

My queen, are you alright? I cannot believe the nerve of that man. He is a petty, rude, selfish oaf who does not deserve even a fraction of your attention. You are the most magnificent creature in the world. You must know that. He is nothing but an insignificant, power hungry/

ELIZABETH

/He's right.

FRANCIS

(hello?)

What?

ELIZABETH

You can't know how much it breaks my heart to say this, but he is correct about the country. About the anger that will grow against me, should we marry.

FRANCIS

My dear, you said/

ELIZABETH

/I know. But everything he said has been lingering in the back of my head for quite some time now.

FRANCIS

So, what does this mean?

ELIZABETH

It means I cannot marry you. The time we spent together has meant the world to me. Please know that, while I must do this for my country and for myself, I will cherish you and all you have given to me as long as I live.

FRANCIS

(dejected)

Then, I suppose this is goodbye.

ELIZABETH

(so, so sad)

I suppose it is.

Francis kneels and kisses her hand.
He then rises and bows.

FRANCIS

I do not think I will ever meet anyone as radiant, as witty,
or as strong as you. You will forever have a place in my
heart.

He exits the room the opposite side
as Dudley.

Elizabeth takes a hot second to
herself, then looks at the door
Dudley used.

ELIZABETH

Have you lost all regard for my will?

Dudley opens the door that he had
cracked open sometime during the
emotional goodbye and steps into
the room.

They hold a tense silence.

You know I could have your head for that stunt you just
pulled.

DUDLEY

I do. Will you.

ELIZABETH

Not this time.

She sits in her tea chair,
dejected.

Dudley sits in the other chair.

DUDLEY

Bess, I know this must be hard.

ELIZABETH

Do not gloat to me, Dudley. I could still change my mind
about your head.

DUDLEY

Do you remember when we were young and Catherine Howard had
just been executed? Do you remember what you said to me? You
vowed that day that you would never marry.

ELIZABETH

(sharp)

That certainly did not deter your advances.

DUDLEY

That isn't my point.

ELIZABETH

Then get to it.

DUDLEY

My point is: you have worked too hard to throw it all away now. Look at what you have done on your own. Look at all that you have build. You've dodged threat after threat and come out stronger for it. You've made England stronger, as well. I can't think of another person with the will and spirit that strong or tenacious. Your sister didn't have it. Your cousin doesn't have it. You are a guiding light, Bess. And I love you too much to let you walk away from that.

Elizabeth puts her hand out on the table. Dudley waits a moment and then takes it.

They sit for a moment, hand in hand.

ELIZABETH

Where would I be without you, Leicester.

Dudley laughs.

Now tell me honestly, how much of this did Cecil tell you to say?

New Scene

Elizabeth is being dressed by Bess of Hardwick.

Bess is tightening Elizabeth's corset as Elizabeth watches the action in the MIRROR.

ELIZABETH

Do you think I am beautiful?

BESS

Of course, your majesty.

ELIZABETH

Be honest. I do not want your pity.

BESS

Your beauty is unmatched.

ELIZABETH

The English people would disagree with you. You, in fact, are touted as one of the most beautiful people in England.

BESS

Your majesty, your beauty is spoken of across the world.

ELIZABETH

I do not believe you. I hear what people say. Faced with so much rejection, Dudley abandoned his search for power and married for beauty instead. Elizabeth fears the Scottish queen, because she possesses the beauty and fertility Elizabeth herself never will.

BESS

Is that all you hear?

ELIZABETH

All that matters.

BESS

I hear the Scottish queen is jealous of the strength and power of the English queen. I hear that, regardless of her lack of husband, Elizabeth has ruled England with the strength and will of any man.

ELIZABETH

Jealousy aside, even in prison there is talk of her trying to take my throne.

BESS

Do you really think, even if she did try, she would be successful?

ELIZABETH

I do not know what I think. Catholics in this country are still less than willing to break from the Pope.

BESS

Is that what you want?

ELIZABETH

I could not care less whether or not people care about the Pope. Does it really matter whether we are Catholic or Protestant? We all worship the same God.

BESS

But that isn't how the Pope sees things.

ELIZABETH

Which means, England needs a Protestant government in order to keep the Pope from practically ruling the world.

BESS

An interesting dilemma.

ELIZABETH

A tired dilemma.

BESS

It sounds to me like you have more important things to worry about than beauty.

ELIZABETH

Do not play naive. If I do not possess beauty, nobody will listen to me. A female monarch is expected to fit a certain narrative and I have already deviated to far from that narrative to not be beautiful. Besides, men will be far less willing to marry an ugly monarch.

BESS

Is marriage what you want?

ELIZABETH

Yes. Or rather, I want the happiness that comes with marriage.

BESS

Do you and the Earl of Leicester not already share that happiness.

ELIZABETH

We did once, I think.

BESS

What happened.

ELIZABETH

He chose someone more beautiful than me.

BESS

Is that why he chose her?

ELIZABETH

I think so.

BESS

Well, I think she was available.

ELIZABETH

I am available.

Bess laughs.

Do not mock me!

BESS

I apologize, my queen, but you are certainly not available. Not to him, at least. Your heart maybe, but not your position.

ELIZABETH

How can I give someone my heart without sacrificing my position?

BESS

I don't think I know the answer to that, your majesty.

Elizabeth looks in the mirror, lost in thought.

With one final tug of the corset, Bess steps away from the queen.

You are ready, my queen.

ELIZABETH

(nods to Bess)

You may go. I'll be along in a moment.

The "reclaiming her beauty song" will probably go here.

Scene ?

WALSINGHAM and CECIL sit alone in the Privy Council Chamber. In front of them are a small stack of LETTERS. They have grave, yet satisfied looks on their faces.

In a flurry ELIZABETH enters followed closely by a concerned DUDLEY. She stops at the end of the table, places her hands firmly on her hips and huffs.

ELIZABETH

Well? What is so important that it could not have waited until the next meeting?

WALSINGHAM

My queen, this will not be easy to hear, but we have concrete evidence of a plot to take our life.

Elizabeth tightens, but she doesn't speak.

CECIL

We have proof that the person orchestrating the plot is none other than your cousin Mary...

ELIZABETH

No. Stop. I don't want to hear another word.

WALSINGHAM

Your majesty, I know how difficult it is for you to accept, but something must be done before/

ELIZABETH

/I have yet to see this concrete evidence you claim to possess, so unless I see it quickly I will not listen to you ramble on with baseless claims.

Cecil presents the letter to Elizabeth who reads it feverishly.

Elizabeth fumes and looks around at the men who surround her.

ELIZABETH

Did you expect me to look at a page of your cypher notes and send an anointed queen to her death? She is my cousin. I will afford her the same respect I'm sure she would my own person.

DUDLEY

Bess, you've never met her.

Elizabeth whips around to face him.

ELIZABETH

Whose side are you on?

WALSINGHAM

You highness, the evidence is before you. I'm afraid there is no doubt of her guilt this time.

ELIZABETH

This page could easily have been forged. I know you, Francis, you're sneaky. How do I know you aren't deceiving me?

WALSINGHAM

Your majesty, you must take this seriously. The threat she poses is quite serious.

ELIZABETH

Threat? How threatening can she be? She's locked away.

CECIL

Your majesty. We are your advisors. We swore to protect you and give honest advice regardless of how displeasing it is to hear.

Walsingham and Cecil look at Elizabeth. She huffs and faces Dudley.

Do you agree with them? ELIZABETH

I do. DUDLEY

Elizabeth turns back to Cecil and Walsingham in an angry pout.

Your majesty, CECIL

He is interrupted by Elizabeth turning on her heel and storming out of the room.

The men share an exasperated and sympathetic breath. Cecil produces MARY'S DEATH WARRANT from the stack of paper

Elizabeth is sitting at her desk feverishly working on one of her Latin translations. She doesn't acknowledge Dudley as he enters the room.

Dudley stands by her STUDY DESK and looks on, waiting for her to say something.

After a tense silence, Dudley finally speaks.

Bess, DUDLEY

ELIZABETH
(Indignantly)
HM...

DUDLEY
Bess, you must think/ rationally...

ELIZABETH
(Slamming her quill down)
/I must? I must do what? Anything at the behest of the noblemen whom I outrank, I suppose. Is that what England has come to? The monarch can't make any decisions for herself now , can she?

DUDLEY
Bess...

ELIZABETH

Shut up Dudley, don't "Bess" me. Have I no autonomy? Am I supposed to roll over when you all order me to kill my own cousin?

DUDLEY

You need to think about your safety. Many believe she has a stronger claim to the throne.

ELIZABETH

What are you saying? That she is the rightful queen? Are you going to try to overthrow me, traitor? Maybe, it is your death warrant I should be signing, not hers.

DUDLEY

(Unamused)

Bess...

ELIZABETH

I'll hear no more of this. Leave me.

Dudley signs before turning to leave.

Just as he reaches the door, he stops and marches back at the desk and firmly places the warrant on the desk in front of Elizabeth.

Her eyes meet his, enraged.

She furiously signs the warrant and then matches his gaze once more.

ELIZABETH

OUT!

Dudley doesn't attempt to combat her.

He takes the warrant and exits the room.

Elizabeth stares at her translations.

After a moment, she stands and exits the room as well.

Scene??

The next morning, the privy council is gathered in their chamber.

A PAGE BOY enters the room in a rush and bows to the table.

PAGE

Apologies, my lords, but her majesty requests that the death warrant for the Queen of Scots be sent with me to her chambers at once.

The council members react accordingly to the message.

CECIL

My boy, that is a very important document. We cannot just send it away.

PAGE

Her majesty told me you might say that. She also instructed me to tell you that if you don't send somebody with the warrant to her study immediately, it's treason.

The councilors groan.

DUDLEY

I'll do it.

Dudley takes the warrant and leaves the chamber.

He arrives at Elizabeth's study where she calmly sits working on translation.

DUDLEY

Bess. What is this about?

ELIZABETH

Leicester, you will address me as "your majesty," unless I instruct you that it is otherwise appropriate.

She smiles cunningly as she stands and takes the warrant from his hands.

She tears the warrant to shreds and then puts the pieces in her stomacher.

Dudley watches in annoyed disbelief.

Elizabeth sits back down and continues to work on her translations.

DUDLEY
(Shocked)

Bess...

ELIZABETH
(waving her hand)

You may go.

Dudley holds for a moment, scoffs,
and then turns to leave.

He pauses in the doorway and looks
back at her as if he wants to say
something, but ultimately leaves.

He returns to the privy council
chamber where the councilors sit
anxiously.

Dudley goes to his seat and sits.

Well?

WALSINGHAM

She tore it up.

DUDLEY

The council groans.

Scene???

Elizabeth and Dudley, just
finishing a walk through the
garden.

They enter from outside the castle,
sharing a laugh.

ELIZABETH
Leicester, you fool. That's ridiculous. The Dutch don't
think.

They share another laugh just as
Walsingham and Cecil enter from the
privy council chamber.

WALSINGHAM
Ah, your majesty. Perfect timing. We have an important
matter to discuss with you.

ELIZABETH
Is it so important that it cannot wait until the council is
gathered together?

CECIL

I'm afraid it's a a matter of national security, my queen.

ELIZABETH

(sigh)

Very well. What is this urgent matter that needs my immediate attention and not my attention in less than a day when the privy council is once again gathered?

Walsingham hands Elizabeth a document.

She reads it passively at first, then intensely.

She flares up as she realizes what she is reading.

She looks back and forth between the three men.

ELIZABETH

Sneaky! I'm not signing it.

She shoves the paper at Walsingham and marches off the stage and into the audience.

Dudley pursues, grabbing the paper as he makes chase.

DUDLEY

Bess, listen to me!

ELIZABETH

(talking over him)

No no no no no no no no etc.

DUDLEY

I know you don't want to give consent to this, but it has to be done. Every moment you delay is a moment you are in mortal danger.

Elizabeth stops suddenly and turns.

Dudley almost bumps into her, but stops himself.

She snatches the warrant out of Dudley's hands and glares at him.

She holds out her hand and waits as he searches his person for a quill.

This takes an awkwardly long time.

She motions for him to turn around before using his back as a writing surface.

She writes hard and makes it hurt.

She grabs him by the shoulder and whips him around, pushing the quill and the warrant into his chest.

She storms back to the stage as he follows closely in tow.

Scene????

The privy council is gathered in their chambers. All are present, except for the queen.

Walsingham stands and addresses the group.

WALSINGHAM

It is time we address the matter of the execution of Mary, Queen of Scots.

He holds the warrant in his hand and prepares to continue.

Elizabeth interrupts him as she burst into the room.

ELIZABETH

Stop!

She rushes to Walsingham and pulls the warrant from his hands, lighting it ablaze with one of the candles on the wall.

She throws it to the ground the whole room watches it burn.

When the burning is finished, she stamps out the flames and turns on her heels to exit the room.

The councilors exchange glances for a few minutes before all collapsing into different groans and protests.

Scene?????

Elizabeth and her ladies maids are

in her private chambers dressing
her to go riding.

She is fastening one of her gloves,
when Bess of Hardwick enters the
room.

BESS

Your majesty, the Earl of Leicester.

Elizabeth nods.

The ladies maid goes to the door
and lets him in.

Elizabeth waves her hand and her
ladies maids leave the room.

They stand in silence.

ELIZABETH

I know you brought it. We might as well get it over with.

Dudley sighs and pulls out yet
another draft of the death warrant.

She signs it and hands it back to
him without looking at him.

He turns to leave, but hesitates.

DUDLEY

May I touch the queen?

ELIZABETH

You may.

Dudley wraps her in a warm hug.
They stay there for a moment.

DUDLEY

You realize this is only happening to keep you safe.

Elizabeth pushes him away softly.

ELIZABETH

And now you've pushed it. Out before I change my mind again.

Dudley kisses her cheek and then
exits.

Elizabeth touches it, smiles, and
finishes with her gloves before
exiting as well.

Scene??????

Elizabeth darts into the full privy council chamber.

ELIZABETH

The warrant. I must have it now.

CECIL

I'm sorry, your majesty, but the warrant has already been sent out. I'm afraid it is too late.

Elizabeth collapses in an emotional heap.

Not long after, however, she snaps up and stares dangerously at all of her concilors.

WALSINGHAM

I am sorry, my queen, but it is in your best interest.

ELIZABETH

It is your desire for her to die, yet it is my soul that will ultimately suffer for it.

She storms out of the room.

Concept Inspiration and Bibliography

Mueller, Janel. "Virtue and Virtuality: Gender in the Self-Representations of Queen Elizabeth I," 2001.

http://fathom.lib.uchicago.edu/1/777777122145/2848_virtuevirtuality.pdf.

- This source inspired the concept for this thesis. It highlights and delves into Elizabeth's relationship with gender with regard to her position.

Levin, C. (1994). *The heart and stomach of a king : Elizabeth I and the politics of sex and power*. United States: Retrieved from <http://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/002875356>

- This source will give me insight into how Elizabeth's sexuality, flirtatious nature, and obsession with beauty and image helped her succeed politically

WADDINGTON, R. B. (1993). Elizabeth I and the order of the garter. *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, 24(1), 97. Retrieved from <https://search.proquest.com/docview/1295939860>

- This source will give me further insight into Elizabeth's politics and behavior in cabinet. I'm hoping this will help me illuminate important members of parliament, so it is easier to isolate important characters.

Queen Elizabeth I. (n.d.). Retrieved December 13, 2019,

from <https://www.rmg.co.uk/discover/explore/leaders-heroes/queen-elizabeth-I>.

- This source will give me highlights of her career, what she is best remembered for, and a timeline of her most important life events.

Elizabeth I's religious settlement. (2019, December 10). Retrieved December 13, 2019,

from <https://www.rmg.co.uk/discover/explore/elizabeth-religious-settlement>.

- This source will give me a basic understanding of Elizabeth's relationship with religion during her reign. It will also help me to understand different tactics and methods she used to help unite a religiously divided England.

Elizabeth I's Royal Wardrobe. (2019, December 11). Retrieved December 13, 2019, from <https://www.rmg.co.uk/discover/explore/elizabeth-royal-wardrobe>.

- This source will help me get a better understanding of how Elizabeth outwardly presented/expressed herself. Her public image was very important to her, so this will help inform how I write her and how she is costumed.

Young Elizabeth and the Seymour scandal. (2016, July 5). Retrieved December 13, 2019, from <https://www.rmg.co.uk/discover/explore/young-elizabeth-and-seymour-scandal>.

- This source will help me understand a crucial event in Elizabeth's childhood that helped shape who she was and how she treated people. This may also give me an excellent starting place in my show.

Elizabeth I and the Earl of Essex. (2019, December 11). Retrieved December 13, 2019, from <https://www.rmg.co.uk/discover/explore/elizabeth-i-and-earl-essex>.

- This source will shed light on Elizabeth's relationship with her lover turned traitor, Robert Devereux. Their sexual relationship and the fact that he led a poorly executed coup against her may be very interesting plot points in my musical.

Timeline. (2000). *Elizabeth*.

- This Timeline documentary, directed by Steven Clarke and Mark Fielder, features the historical knowledge and narration of expert historian David Starkey. This documentary is a roughly 200 minute guide to the most important parts of Elizabeth's

life. This will help me gather a lot of necessary historical information and gain a better understanding of Elizabeth and how she maintained popularity for so long.

Hammer, P. E. (2003, May 5). The Last Decade of Elizabeth I. Retrieved December 13, 2019, from <https://www.historytoday.com/archive/last-decade-elizabeth-i>.

- This will give me important historical information about Elizabeth and the end of her tenure. I don't know if I'm going to use a crazy amount of this, however, as I'm not sure where I'm going to end the musical.