

THE SERPENT QUEEN

EPISODE 108

"The King is Dead. Long Live the King."

Written by

Justin Haythe

Directed by

Justin Haythe

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801 CREDIT SEQUENCE 801

802 EXT. CHENONCEAU GROUNDS - RUGGIERI'S CARAVAN - DAY 802

RAHIMA sifts through the remains of Ruggieri's caravan... which has been destroyed by Mary's soldiers... belongings strewn everywhere.

She is looking for something, unsuccessfully. Then she hears a sound. She turns to look, as --

A hand flattens across her mouth. She goes rigid with terror as an UNSEEN FIGURE presses a KNIFE to her throat -- we may recognize it as the same one used to cut open Catherine's dress in Ep. 103. Which means, of course:

RUGGIERI pulls Rahima close, holding her against him.

RUGGIERI
Looking for me?

RAHIMA swallows her fear.

RAHIMA
Apparently, I'm not the only one.

He releases her, looks her over.

RUGGIERI
I presume you're the one who told
Mary where her men could find me.

He moves away, sifting through the debris with his feet.

RAHIMA
Catherine did not leave me much
choice.

He leans down and picks something from the rubble.

RUGGIERI
No. She's good at that...

He turns and hands it to her.

RUGGIERI (CONT'D)
I presume this is what you're
looking for.

He holds out a royal seal.

RUGGIERI (CONT'D)
Now all you have to do is decide
what you're going to do with it.

803 **EXT. CHENONCEAU - GARDEN BENCH - DAY** 803

CATHERINE sits on a garden bench, waiting. *

She doesn't look up when Rahima sits down beside her. *

RAHIMA *

You wanted to see me? *

CATHERINE *

You've been listening to my story *

for many days now. Wouldn't you *

like to know how it ends? *

RAHIMA *

I would. But perhaps I should be *

the one to tell you. *

ON CATHERINE: a smile. *

RAHIMA (CONT'D)

That was the plan, was it not?

ON CATHERINE: *

CATHERINE

Go on then. I'm listening.

804 **EXT. CHAMBORD - WOODS - DAY** 804

We return to the scene we were following at the end of episode 7. THE LITTLE BOY stands alone under the canopy of trees, beside the small broken-down hay wagon. He bravely faces down the King's convoy as it approaches. Supposedly to ask for their help.

Track out to show the back of MONTMORENCY'S HEAD as he regards the obstacle before him.

Reverse to show Montmorency looking at the boy -- not the diversion he would have chosen to put in the middle of this dangerous plan. But he braces himself for what is to come, nevertheless.

Track further out to show the whole of the King's procession beneath the canopy of trees as it approaches the little figure...

RAHIMA (V.O.)

You convinced Montmorency and the Bourbons to join your kidnapping plot. You turned the Guises against Mary.

(MORE)

RAHIMA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

**Because you planned to help your
son become a better King. You had
good intentions.**

805 **INT. KING'S CARRIAGE - DAY** 805

Catherine sits opposite MARY and FRANCIS II, listening as her son excoriates her character.

RAHIMA (V.O.)

**But when you saw that your son
couldn't be saved... you changed
your mind...**

On Francis II and Mary... getting closer and closer to
Francis II.

FRANCIS II

**...They say you are possessed of a
black heart.**

(MORE)

FRANCIS II (CONT'D)

I've even wondered if it is the blackness in your heart that caused me to be born so sickly. If that is the real reason they call you the Serpent Queen...

Close on: Catherine as she stares at her son. We see the depth of the injury his words inflict.

RAHIMA (V.O.)

You told me you can make things happen if you want them badly enough.

FRANCIS IS OVERWHELMED BY A VIOLENT COUGHING FIT THAT LEAVES BLOOD SPLATTERED ALL OVER HIS SHIRT.

RAHIMA (V.O.)

In that moment, you wanted your son to suffer as he had just made you suffer.

Catherine reacts. The anger disappears from her face, replaced with shock and then the extreme pain of a mother watching her suffering son.

RAHIMA (V.O.)

Though you may have regretted it almost immediately.

On Mary as she loses her wits.

MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS

Francis... Francis...

She tries to hold him... he passes out in her arms.

Then Catherine looks outside. Like Montmorency, she too knows what is coming. She makes an instinctive decision.

CATHERINE

(calling out)
Stop the carriage.

806 EXT. CHAMBORD - WOODS - DAY 806

Montmorency, at the head of the King's Convoy, looks back, surprised.

THE COACHMAN driving the King's carriage pulls his horse's reins and the whole procession comes to a halt.

Track out to see Montmorency trotting back toward the King's carriage in the stopped convoy (from the perspective of someone hidden in the woods).

807 **EXT. CHAMBORD - WOODS - DAY** 807

Reveal: ANTOINE and LOUIS OF BOURBON, their faces uncovered, sitting horseback, as they watch the scene before them. Their masks are raised above their faces. Louis senses trouble before Antoine does.

ANTOINE OF BOURBON
Why is she stopping there? That
wasn't the plan.

*
*

LOUIS OF BOURBON
How the fuck should I know?

807A **INT. GUISE CARRIAGE - DAY** 807A

The Guises wonder what's happening as the carriage stops.

808

EXT. CHAMBORD - WOODS - DAY

808

THE ATTACKERS with crossbows, hidden in the trees on either side of the convoy's path, meet eyes with the boy in the middle of the road: What's going on?

Pan out: show Attackers' view of Montmorency moving down toward the King's carriage... which still hasn't reached the hay wagon and the point of the ambush.

MONTMORENCY approaches the King's carriage, as Catherine gets out. They meet eyes: what's going on?

MARY, Francis II in her arms, calls out through the window of the carriage.

MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS

Help. Help me... The King is ill...

MONTMORENCY looks to Catherine for an indication.

CATHERINE looks at the boy and the hay wagon on the road ahead.

RAHIMA (V.O.)

You devised another plan. A plan that would help you assume a power you always knew should be yours, and yours alone.

Catherine points at the waiting ambush.

CATHERINE

An attack on the King!

FROM BEHIND THE BOY, A CROSSBOW breaks frame from below, aimed at the convoy.

MONTMORENCY sees what's coming. Then turns back to Catherine, angry.

CATHERINE sees: The King's Coachman suddenly hit by an arrow. He falls over.

A HORSEMAN riding the left leading horse of the King's carriage is also hit by an arrow.

MONTMORENCY takes charge as all hell breaks loose. He orders his FOOTMEN.

MONTMORENCY

Stay with the King.

A FOOTMAN rushes to the King's carriage... and is hit on the back with another arrow.

THE OTHER FOOTMEN unsheathe their swords... surround the King's carriage to defend it.

CATHERINE looks around, stuck behind the swordsmen with the King and Mary. Sees:

MONTMORENCY on his horse has a better view of what's happening...

THE ATTACKERS who were hidden in the woods reveal themselves, and fire at the King's Convoy.

THE ATTACKERS who were hidden in the hay wagon reveal themselves, emerging from the wagon, passing the shocked boy and firing toward the King's Convoy.

THE BOY BACKS AWAY, then dives under the hay wagon, safe from the fighting.

THE KING'S FOURTH HORSEMEN falls, hit by an arrow.

HORSEMEN from behind him move up the road on either side of the King's carriage to attack the Bourbons' Crossbowmen who come at them from all sides.

809 **EXT. CHAMBORD - WOODS - DAY** 809

The Bourbons, still hidden in the woods, watch with horror as the whole thing goes terribly wrong and the King's men fight their men on all sides.

Louis lowers his mask back over his face.

LOUIS OF BOURBON
Fuck this.

Louis turns and rides away. Antoine stays a moment longer, transfixed by the utter shit-show unfolding before him.

810 **EXT. KING'S CONVOY - DAY** 810

FRANCOIS OF GUISE climbs out of his carriage as the KING'S MEN in the rear of the convoy move forward.

A VOLLEY OF ARROWS fly toward the King's Men.

FRANCOIS OF GUISE avoids them all. When he straightens, enjoying the rush of being back in action, he sees:

THE ATTACKERS coming from the woods: and Louis of Bourbon riding away.

CLOSE ON: FRANCOIS watching Louis. Then Francois spots A YOUNG, SCARED HORSEMAN, reining his horse back. Francois yanks him from his saddle, mounts the horse and rides away.

WIDE ON: LOUIS riding away from the scene.

Followed by: FRANCOIS riding after him.

And: ANTOINE who spots Francois riding after Louis and lowers his mask and rides in another direction...

A CROSSBOWMAN near Antoine unleashes a second volley of arrows, which fells:

A HORSEMAN near Montmorency.

MONTMORENCY scans the woods to see where the arrows came from. Spots Antoine in the woods. Rides straight toward him.

CATHERINE grabs the reins of the rider-less horse, mounts, and follows Montmorency.

MONTMORENCY rides into the woods, toward the Crossbowman re-loading his bow. Cuts straight through the Crossbowman with his sword...

ANTOINE rides ahead.

MONTMORENCY extracts his bloody sword from his sawed apart victim and rides right after Antoine.

CATHERINE rides right after Montmorency, fleeing the scene of the terribly botched kidnapping, as:

THE REMAINING KING'S MEN charge the hay wagon. The Bourbons' Men charge the King's Men.

One of the Bourbons' Men opens the door of the Guises' carriage, and:

810A INT. GUISE CARRIAGE - DAY 810A

THE CARDINAL OF GUISE gives him a violent kick in the face, enjoying the game.

810B EXT. CHAMBORD - WOODS - DAY 810B

Outside the Guises' carriage the botched kidnapping descends into a hand-to-hand fight. But the King's Men quickly gain the upper hand.

811 INT. KING'S CARRIAGE - DAY

811

As this madness rages around her carriage, MARY, dazed, fearful, holds tightly to the supine, unconscious King. Together they slowly slide down the seat to the floor of the carriage.

MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS
Francis, Francis... Where have you gone? Oh dear, Francis, don't leave me alone in this wicked, godless world...

Then she hears something new: silence followed by:

The door of the carriage is opened.

CARDINAL GUISE leans in:

CARDINAL GUISE
The attack is over. The King is safe...

He reacts to the King's bloody face...

812 EXT. CHAMBORD - WOODS - DAY

812

ANTOINE rides hard through the woods.
MONTMORENCY rides hard behind Antoine.
CATHERINE rides close behind Montmorency.

*
*
*
*

813 **EXT. FELLED TREE - DAY** 813 *

LOUIS rides... in his fashion... in a different direction.

Losing steam, Louis stops his horse near a felled tree trunk and hides underneath. *

814 **EXT. CHAMBORD - WOODS - DAY** 814

Antoine rides well ahead of those who pursue him, just when it seems he may lose them... his horse stumbles and he falls in a heap. A moment later, Montmorency and Catherine are upon him. They climb down from their saddles. *

815 **EXT. FELLED TREE - DAY** 815 *

Louis crouches in his hiding spot in the grotto like a frightened animal. He turns at a sound to see:

Francois the Duke of Guise standing over him. Francois yanks Louis to his feet. Pulls off his mask.

FRANCOIS OF GUISE

You?

LOUIS OF BOURBON

No, no, no... You misunderstand.

FRANCOIS OF GUISE

Un-fucking believable.

LOUIS OF BOURBON

I am here to protect the King. I had heard rumors of a plot.

FRANCOIS OF GUISE

That why you're cowering under a log? *

Francois drags him away. *

FRANCOIS OF GUISE (CONT'D)

You are so fucked.

816 **EXT. CHAMBORD - WOODS - DAY** 816

Montmorency draws his sword and approaches a cowering Antoine.

CATHERINE

What are you doing?

MONTMORENCY

I don't know what you're playing at, but he knows of our involvement. Mary won't leave a head in place if he talks.

Antoine backs away.

ANTOINE OF BOURBON

I won't say anything! Not a word. I swear.

MONTMORENCY

Sorry, Antoine, I've known you all your life and you stand for nothing. So I can't take that risk. I have people I care about.

Catherine intervenes, holding Montmorency back.

CATHERINE

He is the Regent.

MONTMORENCY

I don't give a fuck who he is. Now, get out of my way.

As he shoves past her, Catherine makes an instinctive decision.

She grabs a knife from his belt, plunging it into his side.

Catherine reacts, as if she had not realized what she had done. Stunned, Montmorency looks at her and drops to his knees.

Antoine looks down at Montmorency writhing on the ground. This seems to be the final straw. He dissolves in panic.

ANTOINE OF BOURBON

WHAT THE FUCK IS HAPPENING!?

His panic snaps Catherine to attention. She pulls Antoine to his feet.

CATHERINE

You must run: Follow the creek and in a few miles you will find shelter in a camp in the woods. I will send someone for you. They will take you somewhere safe.

Antoine looks up at her, barely grasping the situation. He has never seen military action.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)

Antoine, do you want to die? You must go now!

Antoine climbs onto Montmorency's horse. He looks back once more and rides, disappearing into the surrounding forest.

For a beat, Catherine is alone with Montmorency. She looks down at him as he loses consciousness.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)

Forgive me.

Montmorency's eyes close, dead as far as we know.

A moment later, Francois of Guise rides up to Catherine who stands beside Montmorency's body.

FRANCOIS OF GUISE

What happened?

CATHERINE

...It was Antoine.

Francois dismounts, examines the body.

FRANCOIS OF GUISE

Antoine? Really? I didn't think he had it in him.

*

Francois bends over Montmorency.

FRANCOIS OF GUISE (CONT'D)

He's still breathing.

Two of his SOLDIERS ride up behind him.

FRANCOIS OF GUISE (CONT'D)

Take your Constable to the hospital. Make sure he is well guarded. He has powerful enemies.

Francois studies the landscape to figure out where Antoine may have gone. Spots Antoine's leather mask. Picks it up.

*

*

FRANCOIS OF GUISE (CONT'D)

We will bring the dogs and hunt him down.

CATHERINE

I wouldn't worry. Antoine won't last long on his own.

He wheels on her.

FRANCOIS OF GUISE

You wouldn't worry? Don't you understand what this means: if those idiot cousins of mine think they can get away with this, we're closer to civil war than any of us realize... We have to find him and kill him or he will raise an army of pissed off Protestants.

CATHERINE

...Of course.

CLOSE ON: Catherine as they take Montmorency away.

817 **INT. CHAMBORD - KING'S CHAMBERS - NIGHT** 817

Francis II lies, propped up in bed, as Doctor Fernel examines him, listening at his chest.

FRANCIS II

I don't need all this fuss. I'm perfectly all right.

Despite his efforts, the King is clearly desperately ill.

818 **INT. CHAMBORD - THRONE ROOM - NIGHT** 818

THE COURT is assembled in the throne room, once again waiting for news of an ailing king.

MARY, her FOUR MARY'S nearby, sits on her throne, shell-shocked, eyes blood-shot from crying, looking at Francis II's empty seat beside her.

MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS

Is it possible this is God's plan for me? While I am yet so young?

FRANCOIS AND THE CARDINAL GUISE -- in a very different frame of mind, motivated, energized -- approach, hoping to fill the apparent power vacuum.

CARDINAL GUISE

There, there, Niece, no matter what His divine plan may be, you can always turn to me, as God's representative, for comfort and guidance.

The Guises exchange looks above her head as Mary barely processes what is happening.

FRANCOIS OF GUISE

Yes, Mary, take comfort in the church and leave governance to us, your faithful uncles. Who have your best interest at heart.

His words begin to jog her out of the trance of grief.

MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS

Yet, my faith and my governance are one...

CARDINAL GUISE

(thinking fast)

Yes, up until this moment. But the Bourbons would never have attempted this... King kidnapping plot - its sheer audacity - if they were not confident of the support of the people.

FRANCOIS OF GUISE

They likely got wind of widespread discontent with the anti-Protestant policies. I have heard there are critics even within the King's personal bodyguard.

MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS

The King's men?! Turn against him? Impossible!

FRANCOIS OF GUISE

Actually, not impossible. They have been asked to arrest and, in instances, execute their own kinsmen. Tends to get people a bit exercised.

CARDINAL GUISE

The thing is, everyone has a breaking point. Your marriage, the treaty with the Holy Roman Emperor, that's one thing. But the mass executions have been excessive.

MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS

Is that what you'd call them?

CARDINAL GUISE

I would.

MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS

Yet, I don't remember you saying
so.

CARDINAL GUISE

We govern through consent as much
as anything else. With the King
ill, if people turn against the
Crown, we could lose control of the
whole country.

Mary looks around, sees Catherine, watching, in total control
of herself and perhaps everyone around her.

MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS

So if Catherine hadn't seen that
culprit on the bridge...

FRANCOIS OF GUISE

All we know is that we must act
rationally now, unemotionally.

CARDINAL GUISE

That is why you must leave matters
to us.

MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS

Catherine, what do you think?

She looks at the Guises.

CATHERINE

I can think only of the health of
my son, our King, at this time... I
would hope your uncles could do the
same.

MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS

Well said.

DR. FERNEL enters.

FRANCOIS OF GUISE

Well, Doctor, how is our King?

Fernel looks around. For a man in his position, this is the
most delicate situation in which he can find himself.

DR. FERNEL

I have made a thorough examination
of the King. There is significant
blockage in both lungs.

(MORE)

DR. FERNEL (CONT'D)

As well as extensive lacerations
that suggest consumption. Something
he was perhaps born with.

Instinctively, he looks at Catherine, then drops his eyes.

CARDINAL GUISE

Will he live?

DR. FERNEL

Who can say?

CARDINAL GUISE

In your professional opinion.

Fernel hesitates. Francois approaches.

FRANCOIS OF GUISE

Say it fucking straight for once.

DR. FERNEL

If you haven't noticed, candor can
be dangerous in my profession.

FRANCOIS OF GUISE

Well, in this case, so is evasion.

DR. FERNEL

Are you threatening me? You will
need me one day. Better for you not
to be on my bad side.

(to the room)

In my professional opinion... The
King's survival is extremely
unlikely.

Mary rises from her throne, finally coming out of her torpor
with a primordial scream. The Marys come to her aid.

MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS

It is the strain of the attack. The
people responsible for this will be
punished. They have seen nothing
yet. Do you hear me? We will soak
France in blood for her treachery.

She exits, followed by her Four Mary's. And then Catherine.
Francois looks at his brother, disgusted.

FRANCOIS OF GUISE

Still think you can manage her?

The Cardinal watches Francois storm out, purposeful.

819

INT. CHAMBORD - CHAMBERS CATHERINE - DAY

819

CLOSE ON: Catherine's face as she processes the events of the last 24 hours.

She sits on the edge of her bed. A million thoughts race through her mind in this unguarded moment as she realizes that the whim of a moment has now become reality: Her first-born son is going to die. She holds her head in her hands, about to unravel, when:

MATHILDE (O.S.)
Your Majesty.

Catherine turns to see her long-suffering assistant, MATHILDE.

MATHILDE (CONT'D)
You have visitors...

Behind her stand Francois the Duke of Guise and his brother the Cardinal.

MATHILDE (CONT'D)
I will leave you.

CATHERINE
You can stay.

CARDINAL GUISE
We came to express our condolences.
I cannot imagine your suffering at this time.

CATHERINE
It seems as if I am cursed to outlive those dearest to me.

CARDINAL GUISE
It is a delicate matter but at a time like this the question of succession must be addressed.

On Catherine feigning innocence.

CATHERINE
What question? My second son, Charles IX, will be King when his brother dies.

FRANCOIS OF GUISE
Of course, but due to his youth, all power will rest with the Regent.

CATHERINE

Antoine of Bourbon, First Prince of the Blood, will be Regent...

FRANCOIS OF GUISE

Had it really escaped your mind? I don't think very much does.

CARDINAL GUISE

Initially, the people will certainly demand we follow the line of succession. But when they hear of the plot against the King, they may change their mind.

Catherine thinks. Waiting, baiting. A spider, letting her prey crawl into her web.

CATHERINE

A new Regent may be possible, if the candidate is trusted by the King. Someone esteemed, with experience.

CLOSE ON: Catherine's face.

CARDINAL GUISE (O.S.)

Our thoughts exactly.

CATHERINE

But who?

The Guises exchange looks.

CARDINAL GUISE

We were thinking of Montmorency.

On Catherine: This was not part of the plan. She covers her surprise.

CATHERINE

Of course, he is an honorable man. But he is hardly in favor. Until recently, he was living in exile.

CARDINAL GUISE

And yet, the people like him. He represents a bygone era of stability.

FRANCOIS OF GUISE

The era of Francis the First.

Catherine gathers herself.

CATHERINE

Montmorency is the best candidate.
Neutral, wise.

CARDINAL GUISE

We are so glad you agree.

CATHERINE

But what of his condition?

Francois looks at her as if he suspects something.

FRANCOIS OF GUISE

Stable. You'll be pleased to hear,
I'm sure.

CARDINAL GUISE

He should make a full recovery. God
be praised.

Beat.

CATHERINE

A miracle.

CARDINAL GUISE

We will need the King's support.
Can we depend on you to convince
him?

FRANCOIS OF GUISE

I think we all see the danger Mary
represents if she were to be
allowed to continue unchecked.

CATHERINE

Of course.

(beat)

But to transfer Regency, the Regent
himself must sign it over.

CARDINAL GUISE

We are aware.

FRANCOIS OF GUISE

My men are searching the
countryside.

CARDINAL GUISE

Antoine has proven surprisingly
stubborn prey.

FRANCOIS OF GUISE

Like a mole.

CATHERINE

Then may I make a suggestion? Louis has been arrested for treason. Offer him clemency and he will tell us how to find his brother.

CARDINAL GUISE

Clemency after an attack on the King. Mary will never go for it.

CATHERINE

But the new Regent will. And, in the meantime, she needn't find out.

The Guises exchange looks.

CARDINAL GUISE

You have vision.

820 INT. CHAMBORD - KING'S CHAMBERS - DAY 820

Francis lies, weak, asleep on his deathbed. Mary kneels by his side, manically praying and chanting the Rosary.

MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS

Our Father, Who art in heaven...
give me the courage to face my
enemies...

The door opens behind her and Catherine walks in, kneels beside her daughter-in-law. She contemplates her dying son's face, gathers herself for what she must do.

CATHERINE

This grief feels unbearable, I know. But a dying King makes for a dangerous time. Now is not the moment to lose your wits. Trust me, I know of what I speak.

Mary turns to her mother-in-law.

MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS

I have not lost my wits. I am plotting cruel and unusual revenge on all of France's traitors.

CATHERINE

You can do that later, when you are Regent.

MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS

Regent?

CATHERINE

You must look ahead. It is difficult to contemplate, but soon your husband will be no more and his brother too young to rule. A regent will be the highest power in the land, Gouvernante of France. Shouldn't that be you?

ON MARY: Wow. She likes this idea. But like the good Catholic she is, she tries to quash the rush of ego she feels. Plays self consciously with her rosary beads.

MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS

Because Antoine of Bourbon can certainly not become Regent now... after this wicked attack on the King. Perhaps it could be me... if I could help France. And it be God's will.

CATHERINE

I believe it is God's will.

MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS

But can a King make his Queen Regent?

CATHERINE

Nothing could be more natural. Henri, if you will remember, asked Antoine to make me Regent when he went to war. But, there are those who conspire against you.

MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS

Against me? Who?

CATHERINE

It pains me to say... But I doubt the loyalty of your uncles... They have confided in me they wish to make Montmorency Regent.

MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS

It is an obvious choice.

CATHERINE

It would be. However, I have information that Montmorency is a Protestant now.

Mary looks bitterly at her rosary.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)

This is not news to you I take it?

MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS

It was relayed by one of my informants that he attends the secret church in the woods. Are my uncles aware?

CATHERINE

They said nothing. But I worry this is precisely the reason they suggested him. To appease the very men who attacked our King... You heard them voice opposition to your policies. Whereas I, like you, believe this is not the time to falter... I have often wondered if the Cardinal is the Catholic he claims to be.

MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS

I am sorry to say a similar thought has crossed my mind.

CATHERINE

Until we understand their true intentions, I believe we should keep this conversation between us.

MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS

Of course... I had not expected you to be a friend, but I am grateful nonetheless.

CATHERINE

We are united in our love for the King. May I give you some advice? Let no one stand in the way of your calling... One thing men can't abide is a woman in power.

Mary nods. Catherine closes her eyes to pray over her son. Mary follows suit.

821 INT. CHAMBORD - DUNGEONS - DAY

821

Cardinal Guise stands in a cell in the dungeons, his brother the Duke behind him, his arms crossed. Before them seated at a wooden table is Louis, trying to be brave.

CARDINAL GUISE

I have to ask, Cousin... What the fuck were you thinking?

LOUIS OF BOURBON
I told you. I was there to prevent
an attack on the King.

FRANCOIS OF GUISE
That you knew about because...?

LOUIS OF BOURBON
I told you. I had heard rumor. I
thought it was my duty to
intervene. I am but a loyal servant
of the Crown.

CARDINAL GUISE
You're fucked is what you are.

FRANCOIS OF GUISE
Mary's going to cut off your fat
head.

LOUIS OF BOURBON
She wouldn't dare.

FRANCOIS OF GUISE
I think you'll find she would.

LOUIS OF BOURBON
Then there will be a civil war.

CARDINAL GUISE
A holy war as far as she's
concerned.

FRANCOIS OF GUISE
She'll love it.

LOUIS OF BOURBON
Well, if she cuts off my head,
yours will be next, mark my words.

The Guises exchange a look.

LOUIS OF BOURBON (CONT'D)
Already crossed your mind, has it?
That's the thing about zealots.
Nothing's ever enough.

Louis drops his head in his hands.

LOUIS OF BOURBON (CONT'D)
Oh God!

FRANCOIS OF GUISE
Come on. It's not that bad.

CLOSE ON: Louis' face. He is genuinely tortured.

LOUIS OF BOURBON

That's what you think. Because you haven't been through what I've been through. Exiled. Unemployed. Separated from the only person you ever trusted. Burdened with a truth, nobody'd believe because in this game we play you sound like a fucking liar whether you are or not. And finally, sentenced to death.

FRANCOIS OF GUISE

But we can avoid all that...

CARDINAL GUISE

What's this truth you're talking about?

LOUIS OF BOURBON

You wouldn't believe me. But trust me when I say, you have a serpent in your midst.

CARDINAL GUISE

Yes, Mary. That's why we're here.

LOUIS OF BOURBON

You haven't the faintest idea what's going on, do you?

CARDINAL GUISE

Listen to me: all you have to do is tell us where to find Antoine and you will be pardoned.

Louis sits up. Looks him in the face.

LOUIS OF BOURBON

No, you listen to me, you fucking idiot. If I knew where the fuck Antoine was, I would fucking tell you. But I don't.

His face crumbles. He begins to cry.

LOUIS OF BOURBON (CONT'D)

I really don't. And I wish I did. Because I miss him... I miss my big brother... Twat that he is.

822

INT. CHAMBORD - DUNGEON HALLWAY - DAY

822

The Duke of Guise sighs and walks away from Louis's cell. His brother the Cardinal follows.

FRANCOIS OF GUISE
What a colossal waste of time.

CARDINAL GUISE
I was quite moved. A tragic story
really, the story of Louis of
Bourbon...

From behind a pillar, MARY CLARE, Mary's Lady in Waiting,
watches the men.

As Mary Clare follows the Guises past a row of cells we see
in one: MATISSE, Aabis's former assistant who was arrested on
suspicious of Protestantism.

823

INT. CHAMBORD - CHAMBERS CATHERINE - DAY

823

CLOSE ON: Mathilde's unhappy face.

MATHILDE
I won't do it. Why should I?

CATHERINE
Because our agreement was one last
favor in order to win your freedom.

MATHILDE
This isn't just a favor. You want
me to kill a man.

CATHERINE
You've done it before.

MATHILDE
An apple filled with poison I never
forced anyone to eat is an entirely
different thing.

CATHERINE
He's half dead already... If he
lives, it will mean our
destruction.

MATHILDE
You should have thought of that
before you stabbed him.

CATHERINE

This is not a request. If you fail,
don't bother coming back.

824 INT. SECRET BARN - DAY 824

In the secret hide-out where Aabis was instructed to bring Antoine, they both sit on stools playing cards over a table. Antoine puts down a winning hand.

ANTOINE OF BOURBON

I win again.

She wonders at him: the sheer guilelessness.

AABIS

Yes. And without strategy or skill.
How do you do it?

ANTOINE OF BOURBON

Pure luck. It's just always been my
way. Drives Louis mad.

AABIS

Fascinating.

They both turn at the sound of a door. Catherine enters. She carries a satchel.

CATHERINE

I see Aabis has been taking good
care of you.

ANTOINE OF BOURBON

Well, this isn't the most
comfortable accommodation I've been
in. But Aabis is... good company.

(to Aabis)

After all this is over, we might
have a moment, you and I.

AABIS

I wouldn't bet on it.

ANTOINE OF BOURBON

Don't underestimate my luck.

CATHERINE

I'm sure your brother would prefer
this to where he finds himself.

ANTOINE OF BOURBON

How is he?

CATHERINE

I haven't seen him. Well as one can be in a dungeon, I imagine.

Catherine turns to Aabis.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)

Would you give us a moment.

Reluctantly, Aabis goes to wait outside. Catherine sits opposite Antoine on Aabis's vacated stool.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)

We have business to discuss.

ANTOINE OF BOURBON

Indeed we do. I would actually be a tad bit more comfortable with some hot food... I believe this region is known for its duck confit... And more wine, of course.

CATHERINE

Of course. And you will have all of that and more, Antoine.

She takes out a formal-looking document from her satchel. Puts it on the table. A pot of ink and a plumed pen beside.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)

As soon as you sign this.

Antoine peruses.

ANTOINE OF BOURBON

Relinquish my Regency... To you... Why would I do that?

CATHERINE

Because your brother has been imprisoned for treason. And if you don't, he will be executed.

Antoine thinks. Then pushes it away.

ANTOINE OF BOURBON

No.

CATHERINE

What do you mean, no?

ANTOINE OF BOURBON

I mean, no. My brother told me to never sign away my Regency again. And I won't.

CATHERINE

But your brother's life is on the line.

ANTOINE OF BOURBON

What proof do I have of that? Louis is clever. Always has been. How do I know he didn't evade the King's men and you're lying when you say he is a captive? Wouldn't be the first time you've lied. You roped us into this kidnapping in the first place. Against Louis' better instincts, I might add. And if he *is* imprisoned, the only thing keeping him alive is the fact that I have not signed over Regency. So, as they say, fuck off. Your move.

Beat. Then Catherine rolls up the document. Puts the writing utensils away. She has been, for once, outfoxed.

825 **EXT. SECRET BARN - DAY** 825

Aabis meets Catherine outside.

AABIS

You said you would help me.

CATHERINE

This is not the time, Aabis.

AABIS

Then when?

CATHERINE

The situation at the moment is delicate. I cannot be seen intervening on behalf of a Protestant.

AABIS

He's not a fucking Protestant... And he won't survive much longer in there.

CATHERINE

Tell me, what is the fate of a boy
when the nation hangs in the
balance?

AABIS

...It is everything.

CATHERINE

Well, I am afraid I cannot afford
such sentimentality.

Exasperated, Catherine walks away.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)

I will see to your friend when the
time is right.

Aabis doesn't look convinced.

826 **EXT. CHAMBORD - WOODS - RUGGIERI'S HUT - DAY**

826

Ruggieri stands beside his wagon. Catherine stands before
him. They study each other.

RUGGIERI

I see you have finally reached for
the throne for yourself. Which is
the thing you have really wanted
all along.

CATHERINE

I don't want my son to suffer.

Ruggieri takes off a necklace with a distinctive locket he
wears around his neck. It's the same locket we saw Catherine
wearing when she first met Rahima.

RUGGIERI

It contains an opiate from the
East. With enough, he will feel no
pain. But in his condition, it will
shorten his days.

CATHERINE

His days are done already. He was
marked for an early grave since he
was born. I pray I am not the
reason.

Catherine goes to take it. He grabs her hand.

RUGGIERI
Don't falter now. We are almost
there.

CATHERINE
We?

RUGGIERI
I saw this in you the first day we
met.

He lets her go. She walks away from him, looking at the
locket full of opium in her hands.

827 **INT. HOSPITAL - HALLWAY - NIGHT** 827

Mathilde walks down a hallway, dressed as a nun.

828 **INT. HOSPITAL - ROOM 1 - NIGHT** 828

Mathilde enters to see a row of SICK MEN in beds. She scans
their faces - none of them is the man she seeks. She
continues into the next room.

829 **INT. HOSPITAL - ROOM MONTMORENCY - NIGHT** 829

Mathilde enters to see empty beds except one, in which
Montmorency lies, his torso bandaged.

As Mathilde approaches, around the corner she is surprised
by a GUARD half asleep seated nearby.

HOSPITAL GUARD
Where do you think you're going?

Mathilde thinks fast.

MATHILDE
I am Sister Grace... of the Sacred
Order of the Diminutives here to
tend to the sick.

ON THE GUARD: He's thrown by her short joke.

HOSPITAL GUARD
Order of the Diminutives - that
some kind of joke?

MATHILDE
You think I would make that up?

He looks unsure.

MATHILDE (CONT'D)

I'm here to wash and change the patient.

HOSPITAL GUARD

Go on then.

MATHILDE

You want to watch? I mean, I won't judge if that's your thing, but according to the Bible, God certainly will.

His sexuality threatened, the Guard demurs.

HOSPITAL GUARD

I have to piss anyway.

He steps out.

Mathilde approaches Montmorency, lying bandaged, on his hospital bed. He looks much better than he did the last time we saw him.

Mathilde examines her prey on the bed. Extracts a small dagger she had concealed in the pocket of her dress. Has a moment of doubt. But steels herself. Eyes the bandage on the chest of her victim, just under his heart, and raises her dagger over it.

MONTMORENCY

Mother...

Montmorency's eyes are shut. He is speaking in his sleep.

MONTMORENCY (CONT'D)

Mother, is that you?

Mathilde is confused. His innocence and vulnerability moves her. What's more, she must keep him quiet.

MATHILDE

Yes, my son. Sleep now.

MONTMORENCY

Mother, it hurts.

Mathilde moves closer, strokes his brow, genuinely caring.

MATHILDE

It's only a dream. Sleep now.

He settles. A beat of hesitation. Then she raises the blade, about to strike.

Then in a sudden motion: Montmorency grabs Mathilde, disarms her and holds the dagger to her throat.

MONTMORENCY
You sure? Doesn't feel like a dream.

MATHILDE
Spare me, please... I didn't want to do it... Let me live.

Beat. The knife to her throat.

MONTMORENCY
Your mistress sent you.

She nods.

MONTMORENCY (CONT'D)
Get me past the guards and I will let you live.

MATHILDE
How do you propose I do that?

He looks over her Nun's habit.

MONTMORENCY
You seem an enterprising woman.

830 INT. CHAMBORD - HALLWAY - DAY 830

Catherine meets Mary, stricken, as she hurries down the hallway to greet her.

MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS
Have you heard the news?
Montmorency...

CATHERINE
Dead? How terrible...

MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS
No, missing.

Beat on Catherine as she realizes her jeopardy just increased exponentially.

MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS (CONT'D)
I fear my uncles may be involved.
And it is part of their plot to name him as Regent.
(comes closer)
(MORE)

MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS (CONT'D)

My maid saw them visiting Louis in
the dungeons.

Catherine thinks fast.

CATHERINE

Then there is not a moment to
lose...

831 INT. SECRET PROTESTANT CHURCH - DAY

831

Montmorency enters the church... sees EDITH seated in a pew.
Approaches her, thinking she is alone.

MONTMORENCY

We have to leave here. Now. France
is no longer safe for us.

Edith doesn't move. Then when she turns to him, Montmorency
sees why: Francois and the Cardinal are there, lurking
threateningly in the shadows.

FRANCOIS OF GUISE

I don't think that's a good idea.

CARDINAL GUISE

No. I think what you want to do is
stay and face your responsibility
to France.

FRANCOIS OF GUISE

Isn't that right, Edith.

MONTMORENCY

Don't you speak to her.

FRANCOIS OF GUISE

Or what? You don't look in any
state to be making threats.

CARDINAL GUISE

Here's the thing: the King is dying
and France needs a new regent.
Antoine can't do it because
everybody knows he was behind the
attack on the King. The situation
needs someone neutral in the
religious conflict. Someone who can
settle things a bit. That's you...
But make no mistake. You will be
our regent. If you don't want
anything to happen to those you
care about.

MONTMORENCY

And you wonder why people have begun to doubt the Church.

CARDINAL GUISE

Look, we're better than the fucking lunatic in charge now.

MONTMORENCY

Your niece is what you made her.

FRANCOIS OF GUISE

Be that as it may, she's now all of our problem. The King will die and we can't have Antoine as Regent. So, if you don't do it, we're stuck with her.

MONTMORENCY

You two are really something. There's nothing you won't do in pursuit of power.

CARDINAL GUISE

Is that supposed to be an insult?

EDITH

Do what they ask.

They all react - the Guises to their new found ally, Montmorency with surprise she would intervene.

CARDINAL GUISE

Good advice.

MONTMORENCY

Shut the fuck up.

He comes closer to her.

MONTMORENCY (CONT'D)

I won't let them hurt you.

EDITH

The people need someone capable of ruling... Who else has the stomach to do what is necessary?

He thinks over her question. He turns back to the Guises. The Guises exchange looks, thinking they have won.

MONTMORENCY

All right.

CARDINAL GUISE

Good man. And just to reiterate, if power goes to your head and you do develop an independent streak...

MONTMORENCY

One thing: anything happens to her, I will kill you.

FRANCOIS OF GUISE

Or die trying. I don't doubt it.

832 INT. CHAMBORD - DUNGEONS - DAY 832

Mary and Catherine sit on chairs opposite Louis in his cell.
Mary holds Louis's hands in hers as she leans close to him.

MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS

Don't you understand? The truth will set you free.

LOUIS OF BOURBON

I couldn't agree more. And that's why you have to believe me. It wasn't me. I was only there to protect the King... Catherine, tell her.

Catherine is calm.

MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS

Just admit your involvement and tell us where to find your brother.

LOUIS OF BOURBON

I told you I don't know where he is.

CATHERINE

Perhaps if we gave him proper incentive, he would tell the truth.

LOUIS OF BOURBON

What does that mean?

Beat as Catherine thinks.

CATHERINE

Cut off his finger.

LOUIS OF BOURBON

What?

MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS

What?

CATHERINE

You must not stray from your path,
Mary.

Louis realizes she is serious. He points at Catherine.

LOUIS OF BOURBON

It was her! She was behind it.

CATHERINE

What are you implying, Louis?

LOUIS OF BOURBON

Mary, I am not your true enemy. She
planned the whole thing. You have
to believe me.

CATHERINE

A man will say anything to save his
skin.

LOUIS OF BOURBON

You fucking bitch.

MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS

I thought you were there to protect
the King. Which is it? Are you a
loyal servant or were you led
astray by the Queen Mother?

Louis falters.

MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS (CONT'D)

I have one question. Will you hand
over your brother and advise him to
sign over the Regency to me?

LOUIS OF BOURBON

You? Regent?

He looks at Catherine.

LOUIS OF BOURBON (CONT'D)

Did you put her up to this?

CATHERINE

I put her up to what is best for
France.

LOUIS OF BOURBON
Jesus, do you even know what the
truth is anymore?

Catherine turns to Mary.

CATHERINE
If you are dedicated to the cause,
there is no excess.

Mary tries to convince herself.

MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS
Yes. Certainly... Guard.

A GUARD approaches.

MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS (CONT'D)
Give me your knife.

The Guard hands Mary his knife.

LOUIS OF BOURBON
Don't do this.

MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS
For the last time, Louis, I ask you
to tell me where Antoine is.

LOUIS OF BOURBON
(slowly)
I don't know where he is.

MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS
Hold him down.

The Guard holds Louis's hand on the table.

LOUIS OF BOURBON
You don't have the guts.

She raises the knife over his hand.

CATHERINE
The little one.

The Guard separates his beringed pinky finger.

LOUIS OF BOURBON
Mary, you have to believe me.
Catherine, for the love of God,
don't do this.

Mary raises the knife.

MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS
Last chance.

LOUIS OF BOURBON
FUCK YOU.

Mary brings the knife down hard... cuts off Louis' pinky finger, Louis screams... and at the sight of the severed digit, Mary faints.

The Guard helps the Queen from the room. Catherine calmly picks up Louis's distinctively ringed finger from the ground, wraps it in a handkerchief and walks out as Louis sobs over his disfigured bloody hand.

LOUIS OF BOURBON (CONT'D)
You're fucking mental.

CATHERINE
No. I'm just better at this than you... Don't ever forget it.

833 **INT. CHAMBORD - ATELIER - DAY** 833

Aabis enters her atelier, begins to take off her cape, when she hears:

MONTMORENCY (O.S.)
I understand you have a friend in trouble.

Aabis turns to see Montmorency. She sees that he is injured, cradling his side.

MONTMORENCY (CONT'D)
Perhaps I could help.

AABIS
And in return?

MONTMORENCY
Tell me where to find Antoine.

AABIS
I would then be betraying my mistress.

MONTMORENCY
As every other member of her retinue before you. It's of her own doing.

834

INT. SECRET BARN - DAY

834

Catherine once again sits opposite ANTOINE across the table. Once again the Regency document and writing tools are spread out before him.

CATHERINE

You said you wanted proof your
brother remains in harm's way if
you don't do as I say.

This time she places a handkerchief on the table between them. He opens it to find Louis' beringed and bloody finger...

CATHERINE (CONT'D)

Happy now?

ANTOINE OF BOURBON

Oh my God. It's his -

CATHERINE

Yes. And they will cut off piece
after piece of him until you sign.

She places the letter in front of him again.

ANTOINE OF BOURBON

(weeping a little)

He'd be so disappointed in me...

Antoine picks up the writing instrument... He is about to sign when he looks up. A strange look across his face.

CATHERINE

Antoine, you will do as I say.

CLICK. Catherine feels the barrel of a gun against her head.

FRANCOIS OF GUISE (O.S.)

No, he won't.

Catherine looks up, sees Francois aim a gun at Antoine as Montmorency holds a gun to her head.

MONTMORENCY

Hello, Catherine.

ANTOINE OF BOURBON

I thought you killed him.

FRANCOIS OF GUISE

I thought you did.

Then Cardinal Guise emerges, standing next to his brother, Francois.

CARDINAL GUISE

This is nice, isn't it? It's like a Privy Council meeting. You know, with guns.

He presents Antoine with a second document.

CARDINAL GUISE (CONT'D)

I believe, Cousin, this is the document you meant to sign.

Antoine puts down the writing instrument.

ANTOINE OF BOURBON

Now, hold on just a second. I have principles you know. That's why I'm Regent. I've been entrusted to safeguard the honor of the royal family of France. I can't just be forced to sign over the Regency to whomever has the bigger gun.

MONTMORENCY

I don't see why not.

Beat. And Montmorency turns and shoots Francois in the leg. As Francois keels over, screaming in pain, Montmorency picks up Francois's gun.

The Cardinal goes to tend his brother and try to stop the bleeding.

CARDINAL GUISE

What the fuck was that?

MONTMORENCY

Come what may, I will be my own man.

Montmorency puts the writing instrument in Antoine's hand. Pulls the edge of the document close to him.

MONTMORENCY (CONT'D)

Sign.

The Cardinal begins to tie off his brother's wound as Francois loses consciousness.

CARDINAL GUISE

You will pay for this, Montmorency. Mark my words, you will pay.

MONTMORENCY

We'll see.

Montmorency points where Antoine should sign.

MONTMORENCY (CONT'D)

Your signature or your blood.

Antoine hesitates. Montmorency points Francois's gun at the Antoine.

MONTMORENCY (CONT'D)

Do you still doubt my conviction?

Antoine signs.

Montmorency pulls out the signed document and turns to Catherine.

Catherine backs away, thinking Montmorency will kill her next.

MONTMORENCY (CONT'D)

I had him sign over the Regency to someone who has ice in their veins... Someone capable of sacrificing their friends and plotting with their enemies to rule France.

He raises the gun as if to shoot.

MONTMORENCY (CONT'D)

I have known you since you were a child. I have watched you navigate challenges that would have destroyed someone twice your age. Either because of your will to survive or because you really are possessed of a black heart. Either way... Francis was right about you. You are the only one to save this country from our rivals.

He lowers the gun.

MONTMORENCY (CONT'D)

I just wanted to put the fear of God in you first. It's what you lack.

He hands her the document.

MONTMORENCY (CONT'D)

All you have to do now is convince
your dying son. You think you have
the stomach for that?

She looks up. Montmorency indicates Antoine -- and the Guises
on the floor.

MONTMORENCY (CONT'D)

I'll make sure you have the time
you need.

835 INT. CHAMBORD - DUNGEON ENTRANCE - DAY 835

A GUARD stands before Aabis and Matisse. He is worse for
wear.

AABIS

Are you alright? Have they hurt
you?

MATISSE

I'm alright... I always knew I
could depend on you. You've never
let me down.

The Guard reads a signed document.

AABIS

He is to be released by the order
of Montmorency, Constable General
of France.

They begin to leave the dungeons. Then the Guard speaks up.

GUARD

Seems to be in order... But I
happen to know Montmorency is in
the hospital. Maybe I should speak
to Queen Mary?

Aabis is caught out. She comes closer to him, seductive.

AABIS

Perhaps we could make an
arrangement?

She moves her hand to his cock. The Guard gives Matisse an
evil look.

GUARD

Make it quick.

She sinks to her knees, reaches for his belt and - stabs him with a hairpin. *

He drops, screams.

Aabis flees with MATISSE.

836 **INT. CHAMBORD - HALLWAY OUTSIDE KING'S CHAMBERS - NIGHT** 836

Catherine approaches her son's rooms to find: Mary waiting outside in tears.

MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS
I did wrong... I did wrong...

CATHERINE
Gather yourself, daughter-in-law.
Tell me, what has happened?

MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS
The Regency... I asked him for the Regency as you told me to... But he accused me of all kinds of baseness... He says I wanted him to be sick... Worse: that I loved him all these years for his sickness because I knew it meant I may rule in his stead one day. He even said I had no interest in performing my wifely duties...

Mary weeps.

CATHERINE
So did he agree to give you the Regency or not?

Mary looks up, puzzled.

MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS
No, of course not. He refused. And I begged him for forgiveness for asking. But he would grant me no such peace...

Catherine is all business.

CATHERINE
Go, calm yourself. Let me speak to him. I will make it right.

MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS
Thank you. He must know I always had his best interests at heart.

CATHERINE
Of course. As we all do.

Mary walks away. Catherine turns to her son's door.

837 INT. CHAMBORD - KING'S CHAMBERS - NIGHT 837

Catherine approaches her son. He lies back on his bed. She looks at his pale face.

CATHERINE
You're in pain, aren't you?

She strokes his brow. We see the vulnerability and fear on his face.

FRANCIS II
...Everywhere. Oh Mother...

He reaches for her hands and she holds the dying son she was never able to care for during his life.

FRANCIS II (CONT'D)
Why does it have to hurt so much. I accommodated myself to death. I always knew it would come early for me. But the pain... I have never known anything like the pain. It seems so unfair.

CATHERINE
You are the strongest person I have ever known. To live with the suffering you have endured. Do you know that?

He looks at her, trying to soak up the love he has always longed for.

FRANCIS II
And now the question of Regency falls on me...

CATHERINE
Try to rest. There is no need to think of it now.

FRANCIS II
I am still King. Therefore, I must think of it.

She gathers herself.

CATHERINE

If you must.

FRANCIS II

Is it true the Bourbons plotted to kidnap me and I must break the chain of succession?

Catherine is silent. Francis reads her face.

CATHERINE

It would be best for the country.

FRANCIS II

You are concerned for the country above your own son. That takes strength. I am sorry I have not understood your true nature until now.

CATHERINE

How can you understand anything now...?

FRANCIS II

They say one sees clearest when one is nearest death.

CATHERINE

Yet, perhaps you won't die. Doctors have been wrong before.

He notices her paper.

FRANCIS II

What do you have with you?

CATHERINE

It's nothing.

FRANCIS II

Show me.

She lays out the document. He takes it.

FRANCIS II (CONT'D)

Antoine has agreed to sign the Regency over to you? Why would he do that?

CATHERINE

I persuaded him.

FRANCIS II

And now you must persuade me.

Beat as he thinks.

FRANCIS II (CONT'D)

Perhaps I would prefer not to see
clearly after all.

He winces from pain. Catherine can bear it no longer. She
takes the necklace Ruggieri gave her from around her neck.

CATHERINE

I have something here that will end
your pain. You simply have to take
a sip. But if you do, it will mean
the end.

FRANCIS II

But first I must sign. Is that it?

She drops her head, ashamed.

CATHERINE

To ask you this takes more strength
than I possess.

She presses the opium into his hands. He looks at it.
Decides. Takes a sip. Feels the drug coursing through his
body and relieving his pain.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)

Now you can rest. Leave your
troubles behind.

FRANCIS II

I do not have half the strength
that you do.

He reaches out as if to take her hand... instead he takes the
quill and signs.

FRANCIS II (CONT'D)

I will leave you to live with your
choices.

He dies in his Mother's arms. She weeps over his body. A beat
on Catherine's face as she absorbs her loss... and reflects
on the truth of her son's last words.

838

EXT. CHAMBORD - COURTYARD - DAWN

838

Louis, hooded, is led to the execution block where the Court is assembled: Mary, her Marys, and Mary's grandmother, ANTOINETTE OF GUISE. Louis' head is lain on the block.

CLOSE ON HIS FACE: his breathing through the hood grows panicked.

AN EXECUTIONER raises his SWORD.

Then looks up at A COURT MESSENGER.

COURT MESSENGER

Hear ye, hear ye. The King is Dead.
Long Live the New King. Louis of
Bourbon, Second Prince of the
Blood, is pardoned for the crime of
treason by the new Regent...

Louis's hood is ripped off... He sees Antoine arrive soon after the Court Messenger, followed by Cardinal Guise. Louis thinks he understands... *

LOUIS OF BOURBON

My brother... My brother is
Regent... Gouvernante of France...

COURT MESSENGER

Her Majesty Queen Catherine is now
Regent... Gouvernante of France.

Louis processes the news. Antoine approaches his brother, overjoyed.

ANTOINE OF BOURBON

I'm so glad to see...

Louis just looks at him. *

ANTOINE OF BOURBON (CONT'D)

I shouldn't have signed the Regency
away under any conditions, should I
have?

LOUIS OF BOURBON

No.

MARY approaches the Guises and the Bourbons, distraught with grief and anger, realizing she has been tricked. Her grandmother follows.

MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS
The King is dead... And my mother-
in-law has taken the Regency for
her own... She has played us all
for fools. *

Mary thinks fast, motivated by a clarifying vengeance. *

MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS (CONT'D) *
I will write to my cousin Elizabeth *
in England. When I tell her that *
this commoner has stolen the throne *
of France, she will be moved to *
help me, I am sure, despite our *
differences. But we must all be *
united in our task. Will my uncles *
back me now? *

CARDINAL GUISE *
Anything to oppose Catherine. *

MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS *
The Bourbon Princes of the Blood? *
Are you with me? *

He gestures back at the executioner's block. *

LOUIS BOURBON *
Am I with you? You fucking joking? *

MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS *
The sanctity of the royal line is *
at stake... What choice do you *
have? *

Louis is disgusted with himself as much as the rest of them. *

LOUIS OF BOURBON *
I'll think about it. *

He turns away, followed by Antoine. *

ANTOINETTE OF GUISE *
I always said my granddaughter has *
vision. *

839 EXT. CHENONCEAU - DAY (FLASHBACK) 839

A royal retinue of carriages enters the gates of Chenonceau.

RAHIMA (V.O.)
Once you were Regent, you moved the
Court to Chenonceau where you could
keep a better eye on your enemies.

840 **EXT. CHENONCEAU/QUEEN'S CARRIAGE - DAY (FLASHBACK)** 840

Catherine steps out of her carriage in front of Chenonceau. She looks over, sees - Rahima loitering beside a wagon laden with provisions and overseen by a GUARD.

RAHIMA (V.O.)

You only needed one final piece to seal your victory against Mary...

GUARD

I'm sorry. I can't help you.

Rahima begins to weep.

RAHIMA

It's just... I have nobody and nowhere to go...

GUARD

All right. Don't cry. Let me ask the Cook if she needs another Maid.

As he walks away, Rahima's tears stop just as quickly as they began. She looks around and steals an apple from the unguarded wagon.

841 **EXT. CHENONCEAU - GARDEN BENCH - DAY** 841

We return to Rahima and Catherine on the garden bench.

RAHIMA
And when you found me, you didn't
waste any time...

841A INT. CHENONCEAU - WINDOW - MARY'S CHAMBERS - DAY 841A *

Mary stands at a window, hands A MESSENGER, a young boy, a
letter. *

MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS
Make sure this finds its way to my
cousin Queen Elizabeth of England. *
Move post haste and let no one *
delay you. *

RAHIMA (V.O.)
Because you knew Mary had sent a
letter to her cousin Queen
Elizabeth in England.

841B EXT. CHENONCEAU - WOODS - DAY 841B *

Ruggieri stands at the side of the road, twisting a doll. *
Looks up as: *

The messenger on horseback approaching. Ruggieri holds out
the doll. *

RUGGIERI
Would you like it?

The Messenger is transfixed. *

RUGGIERI (CONT'D)
Want me to tell your future?

RAHIMA (V.O.)
A letter, I am guessing, that never
found its way to its recipient, but
could be used to get rid of Mary
once and for all... if you found
the right accomplice.

842 EXT. CHENONCEAU - ATELIER - DAY 842

FLASHBACK: We see Catherine point to the dress in the atelier
for Rahima.

RAHIMA (V.O.)
First, you made sure to win my
trust. So that when you asked me, I
would go to Mary's chambers to
steal a letter that never
existed.....

843 INT. CHENONCEAU - HALLWAY - DAY 843

FLASHBACK: Mary Clare confronts Rahima in Queen Mary's room.

RAHIMA (V.O.)
And then you made sure I would
despise you.

844 INT. CHENONCEAU - ROOM SERVANT/RAHIMA - DAY 844

In her bare room, Rahima sits on the floor opposite Mary,
listening to the young Queen's story.

RAHIMA (V.O.)
And Mary would believe...

845 INT. CHENONCEAU - CHAMBERS CATHERINE - DAY 845

FLASHBACK: Rahima takes the letter from the hiding spot in
Catherine's rooms.

RAHIMA (V.O.)
The letter she asked me to steal
from you and deliver to her was
really from her cousin...

846 EXT. CHENONCEAU - GARDEN BENCH - DAY 846

On the garden bench, Rahima produces the letter she stole
from Catherine's cupboard. Marked with a distinctive seal.

RAHIMA
Though now I know this letter
asking Mary to return to Scotland
and join forces with Elizabeth to
dethrone you... is a forgery.

Rahima produces Queen Elizabeth's seal: this is what she was
looking for in Ruggieri's camp.

RAHIMA (CONT'D)
I looked for the replica of Queen
Elizabeth's seal in your magician's
camp. The sight of him watching us
on our ride made me suspicious.

CATHERINE
You are very clever. That's why I
chose you. So now you must decide
what you are going to do. Are you
with the Serpent Queen or against
her?

*
*
*
*

RAHIMA

First, I want to know. You did away
with your best friend, your
husband, your son... for power?

CATHERINE

No...
(turns)
For freedom.

Beat on Rahima.

RAHIMA

In that case, I will do as you ask.

Rahima takes a document from her pocket.

RAHIMA (CONT'D)

Here are my terms.

CATHERINE

I thought you couldn't read.

RAHIMA

There's lots of things you don't
know about me.

Catherine peruses the document.

CATHERINE

A title? And property...? A little
education is a dangerous thing.

RAHIMA

Apparently.

CATHERINE

Feels pretty good to be bad, doesn't
it? I knew you were the one.

*

847 INT. CHENONCEAU - GALLERY - DAY

847

Rahima hands the forged letter to Mary, who is with the
Bourbons and the Guises and her Mary's.

Mary breaks the seal, reads.

She rises to her feet.

MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS

Mary, Mary, Mary, Mary... We must
prepare to depart immediately.

She turns to the Bourbons and the Guises.

MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS (CONT'D)
My cousin has answered my call for aid. I will return to Scotland to raise an army with my cousin, Queen Elizabeth of England...

The Bourbons and the Guises exchange glances.

MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS (CONT'D)
And mark my words: When I return, I will wreak vengeance on Catherine. She has played us all for fools. She never intended for me to be Regent. She knew if I asked Francis to make me so, he would cast me out. And by doing so, she made sure he was alone and defenseless in the last moments of his life and she could exploit that weakness to make herself Regent.

ANTOINE OF BOURBON
Well, obviously, yeah.

MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS
It shall not stand. I shall return Queen of France and Scotland.

LOUIS OF BOURBON
If you say so.

CARDINAL GUISE
Godspeed.

Mary turns to Rahima.

MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS
History will remember you.

Mary goes out. The others follow. Francois stops in front of Rahima as he passes.

FRANCOIS OF GUISE
I wouldn't count on it.

848 **EXT. CHURCH BELLS - DAY** 848

Church bells ring...

849 **INT. ROYAL CARRIAGE - DAY** 849

Catherine rides to the coronation with her son, CHARLES IX.

CATHERINE
I will let nothing happen to you.

CHARLES IX
What could happen to me?

She takes his hand.

CATHERINE
Precisely.

850 INT. CATHEDRAL - DAY 850

CUT TO: A black train slithering over the floor... Just as in the credits, we catch glimpses of her as she passes her audience, from above, from the side, from the back, but not yet her face.

As she passes, we recognize... *

First MATHILDE, standing at the wings, unsure of her place in the new order. *

Then AABIS and MATISSE... Seated amongst the public. *

THEN SOMEONE WE DID NOT EXPECT... DIANE, now free of her gold habit. She exchanges a look with Catherine. Diane bows her head in deference. ANGELICA is beside Diane. *

ANGELICA
Looks like all's forgiven. *

DIANE
I wouldn't say that. But I imagine she realizes she cannot govern without women like me on her side. And I intend to dedicate myself to her cause. *

Catherine passes Francois of Guise with a walking stick, beside him, ANTOINETTE OF GUISE and on the other side Louis of Bourbon with his bandaged hand and Antoine of Bourbon, all gathered to see the new King. *

ANTOINE turns to Louis.

ANTOINE OF BOURBON
Well that's that then. Check mate.

LOUIS OF BOURBON
Oh, on the contrary. I will spend the rest of my life getting her back for what she did to us.
(smiles at Catherine)
(MORE) *

LOUIS OF BOURBON (CONT'D)

But, in the meantime, we shall
convince her we are her closest
allies.

*
*
*

We move behind Catherine as she walks toward the altar where
Cardinal Guise waits to crown the new King Charles IX.

INTERCUT WITH:

851 EXT. SCOTTISH COAST - DAY (FLASH FORWARD) 851

Mary, accompanied by her Ladies-In-Waiting, disembarks on
Scotland's rocky coast.

SCOTTISH SOLDIERS greet her.

MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS
My homeland. I have returned!

SCOTTISH SOLDIER
Queen Mary, what are you doing
here?

MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS
My cousin wrote to me that she
would help me in my time of need.

SCOTTISH SOLDIER
Surely you know your cousin
Elizabeth will not tolerate your
presence on English soil? She will
see it as a threat to her rule. She
has sworn as much.

MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS
But her letter said...

SCOTTISH SOLDIER
Letter? If there was such a letter,
I'm sure you've been fooled by a
forgery, Your Majesty.

Beat on Mary as she realizes.

852 INT. CATHEDRAL - DAY 852

Catherine steps up to the altar where Cardinal Guise stands
beside the young King.

ANTOINETTE, in the pews, turns to her eldest son, Francois of
Guise.

ANTOINETTE OF GUISE

So it was Catherine who triumphed
after all... And to think just a
week ago, you had them all right
where you wanted them. Now she
promises to make tolerance the new
law of the land and break the
treaty with the Holy Roman
Emperor... No official religion at
all. Which leaves you and your
brother no advantage to trade upon.
I wonder if it is not the
ambiguities of your character that
make you soft.

*

*

FRANCOIS OF GUISE

Mother, when will you shut up?

ANTOINETTE OF GUISE

Isn't it obvious: when you do
something to shut me up.

Francois looks forward, determined, as -

CATHERINE mounts the dais -

853 **INT. SECRET PROTESTANT CHURCH - NIGHT (FLASH FORWARD)** 853

Edith leads her CONGREGATION in prayer... Until something
outside her window catches her eye. She sees:

854 **EXT. SECRET PROTESTANT CHURCH - NIGHT (FLASH FORWARD)** 854

SOLDIERS encircle the secret Protestant church with flaming
torches. Francois of Guise leads them.

855 **INT. CATHEDRAL - DAY** 855

Waiting for Catherine on the dais are: Montmorency and
Rahima, looking very much like a landed aristocrat, nothing
like the servant she was when we first met her at the
beginning of the season.

CATHERINE nods at Rahima, then turns to Montmorency.

CATHERINE

Thank you for your loyalty.

He bows.

MONTMORENCY

Keep in mind. You will only have it
as long as you can protect the
people I love.

*

CATHERINE
Of course.

Catherine turns to face the audience, as:

CARDINAL GUISE blesses the new King, moving a crown toward his head. Catherine takes the crown from the Cardinal...

CATHERINE (CONT'D)
Allow me.

Catherine raises the crown over her son's head, leaving no doubt who will be the real authority. *

856 **EXT. SECRET PROTESTANT CHURCH - NIGHT (FLASH FORWARD)** 856

Francois addresses his Soldiers who surround Edith's church.

FRANCOIS OF GUISE
Burn them out.

The Soldiers move in on Edith's church.

RUGGIERI watches from behind a tree. The flames reflected in his eyes.

857 **INT. CATHEDRAL - DAY** 857 *

Close on Rahima as she turns to the camera. *

RAHIMA
Trust no one.

END OF EPISODE