

The Solitude of Kit Marlowe

by
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Cast of Characters

Christopher "Kit" Marlowe: Frozen in time in the afterlife at age twenty nine. He is insanely intelligent, quick-witted, irreverent, and blunt, especially with the perspective he has gained in the great beyond. He calls it like he sees it with even less hesitation than he did in life. He has a sense of bravado and self-confidence that make him a rather guarded person- nothing seems like it can get to him. However, when talking about things he is passionate about, observations he is particularly proud of, or sharing his writing, he is more vulnerable and reveals himself to be down to earth, perceptive, and self-aware. Perhaps, in those moments, he could even be considered sensitive.

Faust: Kit's infamous character who is now doomed to the hell Kit wrote him into forever, and his resentment of Kit for that is absolutely apparent. His disposition is that of an apathetic teen- he does what's asked of him but he thinks it's stupid and he doesn't even wanna be here. Like any angsty teen, he also has absolutely no filter and will say whatever biting remarks enter his mind. But he also may not be just that.

Twin 1

Twin 2

Casting Notes

- This show embraces the convention of Elizabethan drag with arms wide open. Gender is irrelevant, especially for the twins, as they swap genders often.

Script Notes

- An asterisk (*) followed by bold and underlined text is a placeholder for potential improvisation that can be references contemporary to when/where the play is being performed and/or audience interaction.
- (RP) before a line dictates that a line should be performed in received pronunciation, (OP) that a line should be performed in original pronunciation, and no designation meaning a neutral American dialect.

Prologue

SETTING: KIT'S room in the afterlife. 1593. The stage is entirely bare, except for one desk. There is a closed door in an upstage corner of the stage.

AT RISE: The audience sits in the dark as indiscriminate sounds of an altercation gradually get louder and louder. The sound of a knife being drawn ends the noise. Lights suddenly come up on the stage just as KIT pops up from behind the desk in Elizabethan dress with a bewildered look on his face. KIT looks around for a moment confused.

KIT

(RP- WHOLE SCENE) WHERE THE HELL AM I???

(Realizes he can see out of both eyes despite his last memory.)

Why aren't I bleeding???

(A realization.)

Wait...

(As Kit is having the realization, a figure steps out of the darkness.)

FAUST

(RP- WHOLE SCENE. Quoting *Dr. Faustus* Act V Scene 2. Standing still. Quiet agony that crescendos through the end of the scene.)
Stand still, you ever-moving spheres of heaven,
That time may cease, and midnight never come...

KIT

Where am I? Who are you?

FAUST

The stars move still, time runs, the clock will strike,
The Devil will come, and *Faustus* must be damn'd.

KIT

... Faust?

FAUST

O, I'll leap up to heaven! -Who pulls me down?-

KIT

What is going on?

FAUST

(Beginning to move towards KIT somewhat menacingly)
Rend not my heart for naming of my Christ;
Yet will I call on him: O, spare me, *Lucifer!*

KIT

(Backing away to keep distance) This can't be real. You aren't real.

FAUST

Mountains and hills, come, come and fall on me,
And hide me from the heavy wrath of heaven!

(KIT turns his back to FAUST for the first time and bolts for the door in the upstage corner. It is locked, so KIT starts to bang on it.)

KIT

Can someone please tell me what is going on???

(Black out.)

Scene 1

(When lights come back up, it is now the afterlife in current times. The passage of time is shown on the stage by the desk now looking well-used: covered in books, a wastebasket full of crumpled paper, etc. The sound of someone laughing is heard offstage, and then KIT enters. Now, he is in contemporary dress, phone in hand, carrying an iced coffee.)

KIT

(The accent he had before is now completely gone.) ***Improv line about a current event that Kit's dark sense of humor would find funny***

(Laughing fit resumes. During the fit, he looks up from his phone upon entering his room and notices the audience. He is shocked into silence and stands still looking at the audience for a moment.)

Hello... Never seen you here before. I would think I would have noticed you all before considering I've been here for- (Looks at date on phone) 429 years. Are you all dead too? (Crosses downstage and examines an audience member) No... you can't be. You have that distinct look of blissful ignorance to the true gravity of your existence that can only be accomplished by being alive. How do I say this politely... What are you doing here? (Pauses for a moment. If someone tries to respond, interrupt them.) I don't care. I'll take the attention!

(Scurrying over to put coffee and phone on the desk.)

Excuse the mess, I didn't know I'd be entertaining today, and you have to find something to fill the time here! Eternally stuck in the same place! No end in sight! (Nervous laughter)

From what I know of what's going on here, and the look of confusion on- (Singles out an audience member) your face, I shall take a leap and assume most of you don't know who I am- and I can't blame you for that. You have been failed by your

educational system! And no- I'm not talking about the redlining, the nonexistent funding, or the preying on students at neglected schools to keep your militaries populated. I'm talking about content. And no- I'm not talking about the standardized testing, the lack of real world knowledge, or the whitewashed everything. I am talking about the literature. None of my work is a standard part of your curriculums! Yet, one of my contemporaries, I'm not going to name names because god knows he already gets enough attention, is hailed as the greatest playwright of all time! And! Is a staple of education from primary school through your highest levels of academia! Meanwhile, I've been reduced to a random piece of trivia! Or, even worse, a SIDE CHARACTER IN STORIES ABOUT HIM! (Tantrum. Throws something at the door upstage. Then he suddenly remembers the audience is there and realizes he's gotten carried away) But I digress.

(Crosses back to desk, takes a sip of iced coffee. Once he has regained composure, he crosses back downstage.)

What's say we try that again? As I was attempting to say before, I believe some introductions are in order. My Christian name is Christopher Marlowe, but I'm an atheist so you can call me Kit. I can't tell you exactly when I was born. Why? Because I don't know. But I can tell you I was baptized on the twenty-sixth of February in the year of our Lord, 1564. For the dirty, sinful peasantry like I came from who couldn't afford to buy their way into a good spot in the afterlife, knowing when you were baptized was a much more critical piece of information; the only one that got officially documented, anyway. Which reveals something else about me- I was born into a slightly below average family in Canterbury parish.

(Side-bar) To which I'm sure you're all thinking, "Well then where's your accent, you silly little man?" To which I say, "The kind of British accent you're assuming I should have was literally made up! British people started colonizing the world and dominating trade, and the accents of commoners and tradesmen who were doing the trading and the colonizing started getting really muddy because they were getting influenced by all the

cultures they were interacting with, forcing British people to acknowledge the lack of any kind of originality in their culture, and leading them to inventing the accent you now associate with British people in order to feel superior! And after four hundred years in the afterlife I thought, "What's the point anymore?!" You Americans came over here and started getting so busy manifesting your destiny that you got to stop using it so why can't I??? Forgive me for not sounding like Dame Julie fucking Andrews!

(Trails off into thought for a moment.)

I'm quite a fabulous person, actually, with or without an accent. And the story of my life is teeming with intrigue. Honestly, it's offensive that you people would rather remake and/or adapt the same five plots over and over again rather than take advantage of the engaging, entertaining, educational, dramatic, but also hilarious, inspiring, and REVOLUTIONARY content that is the story of my life! It's just sitting there, practically WAITING for someone to come and make it the dramatic masterpiece it rightly deserves to be! (An idea dawns) However, as fortune would have it, I've needed something to do for the last 429 years. No rest for a wicked mind! When it became clear to me that no one was capable of seeing the dramatic potential of my story, I took it upon myself to write an autobiographical play. [HE PULLS A TOME-SIZED STACK OF PAPER OUT OF HIS DESK. IT'S THE MANUSCRIPT.] I'm the only person I truly trust to do that. I've been trying to figure out how I would get this to you all for some time now, and I suppose your arrival here is the answer to my problem! As I'm sure you can guess, considering the fact that I'm dead and whatnot, I can't bring things into existence in the mortal realm. Which means this absolute masterpiece, this Dionysian juggernaut, has just been forced to wallow in this realm with me. (Suddenly becoming very introspective) It deserves better than that. I deserve better than that.

(Attention turning back to the audience, reassuming persona) Apologies! You caught me being vulnerable. It's far too early in our relationship for that! So, back to my most recent

masterpiece. I have a proposition- what if I give you all the privilege of witnessing the play's debut performance? I know no one reads anymore, and if they do, it is for the sole purpose of being able to constantly advertise that they do. I haven't performed in a long time but I shall trace back to my roots in order to engage all of your teensy attention spans that have been obliterated by TikTok. There will be intrigue, espionage, heartbreak, active homosexualing across the British Isles, comedy at the expense of the Church of England, and so much more! When I am done, if anyone in this audience has taste, they will have no choice but to let the play live and share it with the world! What do you say? (Once again doesn't wait for a response) Peachy!

Now, I am an exceptional individual, but I'll need some assistance to accomplish this... I know just the person to ask! Fausty, dear, can you hear me wherever you are?

FAUST

(FAUST appears.) Ugh, yeah. And stop calling me that!

KIT

Brilliant. (Aside to the audience) The not-so-honorable Dr. Faust's sentence, once he got dragged into hell, was being technical director for autobiographical cabaret acts for the rest of eternity. (Back to FAUST) Fausty Flakes, my eternally-damned little hellion, I've decided to put on my show for these beautiful people. Care to assist me? Oh wait, you don't have a choice! You're in a hell of my invention!

FAUST

(Exasperated grunt like an angsty teen) God, fine! What do you want?

KIT

Well we'll absolutely need some changes in lighting throughout the performance to establish location and set the mood, perhaps some sound to make this an immersive learning experience, oh and see if you can find the Bobbsey Twins, I can use them as

stand-ins for the supporting characters in the story of my life.
(To the audience) I, of course, will be the leading man.

FAUST

Uggghhhh, but finding them is gonna take forever!

KIT

Oh, I'm sorry, do you have somewhere else to be? Hop to it now!

FAUST

God, fine!

KIT

(Antagonizing) How's that unchecked power and limitless knowledge working out for you, mein Faustliebbling?

FAUST

(As he exits) Shut up! I hate you!

KIT

(Maniacally laughing) I love watching heterosexual men have to deal with the consequences of their own choices. (Revels for a moment then heads back to desk.)

While we're waiting for the little Faustmeister to once again grace us with his delicious flippancy, some observational comedy! (Pulls a microphone out of a desk drawer) Gentlefolk of the audience, I would like to take a moment to discuss cancel culture. *Acknowledge how vibe in room shifts if it does* It, like many things people today obsess over, isn't real. We just made it up! But what is real are the people who get caught up in it. That's what I want to discuss! I've had much time here to observe this phenomenon play out. I can give you a detailed account of any major beef that has occurred on Twitter within the last ten years, a summary of any forty-minute apology video from a desperate beauty guru, or any two-hour special where one couple takes it upon themselves to tear the longest-reigning monarchy a new one that you didn't get to watch because my god how many streaming services do I have to pay for?

I've noticed within this culture a few different participating groups. Once again, I'm not going to name names because I don't know who is in this audience, and while audiences may not throw tomatoes anymore, they do still throw hands. So, let's call these groups A, B, C, and D. Groups A and B are the two main groups. Now, Group A isn't out to ruin peoples' lives, they are simply calling for greater accountability. Every action has an equal and opposite reaction. In the eyes of Group A, if the best way to hold someone accountable is to deprive them of the life that enabled them to do bad things in the first place, so be it. Group B is the group of people that know they've done things Group A would cancel them for, so they run to news stations that may or may not be named after medium-sized red forest creatures and say things like, "This is a witch hunt!" Which, by the way, is such an ignorant statement it borders on cute. Anyone who says that has clearly never seen an actual witch hunt. Don't even try to talk to me until you've watched a woman get accused of being possessed by a devil because she was having an asthma attack.

Group C are the extremists that have something to prove. There is potential for them to be absorbed by either A or B, depending on what they have to prove. The part of Group C that gets absorbed by Group A are people who have done cancel-worthy things and instead of trying to disavow cancel culture they go full tilt psychotic, "mea culpa" crying social justice warriors trying to cancel anyone who has so much as watched *Gone with the Wind* to distract people from how prejudiced *they* are. The Group C-ers that get absorbed by B are the kind of people who identify more with the ideals of Group A but were raised by Group B people. So, in order to pull attention from that time they had a gay makeout session in college just to feel something, they use cancel culture for the ideals of Group B, attempting to cancel the most random shit. "Those drag queens are reading books to children! Close down the library!!" Translation: "My parents never held me as a child, so the concept of someone devoting time to a child that isn't even theirs points out the flawed logic of the reality I have constructed for myself, and I don't know what to do with that!"

Finally, there is Group D, those poor saps, who are an independent group that do their own thing. This lamentable lot of hollow human husks are individuals whose moral compasses have been so absolutely obliterated by the inhumanity of modernity that as long as their day-to-day remains essentially unaffected, they've got too much going on to give a shit about which dairy brand got exposed for selling watered down skim milk and calling it almond milk.

If I may- you think someone getting kicked off a team or fired from their job because they used racial slurs is "excessive" and "ruining someone's promising future?" That isn't canceling, that's the consequence of an action, and allowing people of color to feel safe in their place of employment. Also, if your IQ is so low you thought doing that was funny, your future wasn't promising to begin with. In my day, the way we got canceled if we said something hateful was getting our tongues cut out with rusty sheep shears in the middle of the town square. But please, go on about how unfair and damaging demonetizing someone's youtube channel is.

(FAUST reenters)

FAUST

I'm back.

KIT

Ah, my lackadaisical Fausterella, perfect timing! Have you gathered all the necessaries I asked you to?

FAUST

Can you stop it with all these stupid names???

KIT

(Gingerly) No. You didn't answer my question, my cute little miscreant!

FAUST

Yeah I did.

KIT

You were able to find the twins???

FAUST

Yeah.

KIT

Amazing! Bring them out for a moment so I can introduce them.

(Two people come out on stage- TWIN 1 and TWIN 2. They have very neutral energies, completely blank slates.)

KIT

Meet the twins! I'm not quite sure who or what they are, to be transparent with you. They just appeared one day, and the only words I have ever been able to get out of them are quotations from my works, so I at least know they have good taste-

TWIN 1

(Interrupting, Quoting Act 4 Scene 4 of *Tamburlaine Pt. 1*, snapping out of neutrality into an impassioned call to battle. RP.)

"Now hang our bloody colours by Damascus,
Reflexing hues of blood upon their heads,
While they walk quivering on their city-walls,
Half-dead for fear before they feel my wrath.
Then let us freely banquet, and carouse
Full bowls of wine unto the god of war!"

KIT

(Somewhat phased by the outburst) ... uh huh... (Back to the audience) I call them the twins because it's like living with the twins from *The Shining*, except they only use your own words back at you which is... somehow more unsettling...

TWIN 2

(In a similar outburst to TWIN 1, quoting Act 5 Scene 1 of *Dido*, literally a monologue a woman gives before throwing herself onto a flaming heap. RP.)

"And now, ye gods, that guide the starry frame
And order all things at your high dispose,
Grant, though the traitors land in Italy,
They may be still tormented with unrest.
And from mine ashes let a conqueror arise,
That may revenge this treason to a queen
By plowing up his countries with the sword."

KIT

God, what a pair of melodramatic queens you are. It's about time I gave you two some new material. (Grabbing the pages from the desk and distributing them to the TWINS.) Here we go, children, time to shake things up a bit and put on a show for these nice people!

FAUST

Can we just get going already? This is taking forever.

KIT

Since you're asking so nicely, how could I ever say no to you, Fausty Spice? Gentlefolk of the audience, prepare to witness the performance of a lifetime! Lights!

Blackout.

End of Scene 1.

Scene 2

(Centerstage spotlight slowly comes up to reveal KIT standing directly below it. He is in the same contemporary clothing we saw him in at the end of the last scene, but he has added an Elizabethan ruffle collar. Sounds of the bustle of the Canterbury market can be heard, as well as Elizabethan minstrel music that is underscoring it all.)

KIT

(RP) O!

Oh Muses fair, we pray thee, come and make
 your servants apt to honor and give thanks
 for granting man your splendor manifest.
 Within the fort of Canterb'ry, where hope
 was ravaged by a plague, serve witness to
 your coming on a blessed winter day.
 A child born of a mother wracked with fear,
 you gifted wit and talent, and ordained
 to make him great! So come close now dear folk
 who've gathered round this place, and dare to look
 upon the life of one who changed the stage.

TWIN 2 (as Katherine)

(With the glow of someone who just gave birth in a Hallmark movie. RP.)

My love, the Lord has shone on us this day!
 Our prayers are answered with this perfect boy!

TWIN 1 (as John)

(RP.) I thank the heavens for your strength and will.
 You've brought new light into this darkened world,
 and with it roused my love for you, my dear.

FAUST

(Interrupting the scene, John and Katherine freeze) Uhhhh, that's not even how it happened, you're such a bad liar.

KIT

Since when are you the arbiter of truth and morality around here?

FAUST

Didn't your mom say it went more like-

TWIN 2 (as Katherine)

(Ear-piercing screams of a person in labor with no painkillers)

TWIN 1 (as John)

(OP) IT BETTER BE A BOY THIS TIME, WOMAN, OR SO HELP ME GOD I'M SENDING YOU BACK TO YOUR FAMILY.

TWIN 2

(Ear-piercing screams of a person in labor with no painkillers, but louder this time.)

KIT

Art doesn't always have to reflect life, you know.

FAUST

I just think it's kinda stupid to make this huge deal about how no one knows who you really are if you're just going to lie about it when you finally get the chance to tell people.

KIT

I'm not-

FAUST

Also no one talks like that anymore. Your use of language in your plays, among other things, is what makes you inaccessible to modern-day audiences in the first place. If you want these people to bring this new one back and share it, isn't it kind of counterintuitive to use the same verbiage that makes your original works feel unrelatable and outdated in the first place?

KIT

(Stunned silence)

FAUST

But whatever it's your play I guess. (Restarts the scene)

TWIN 2

(Resumes agonizing screams of childbirth for about one second before-)

KIT

(Snapping out of stunned silence) Ok, ok, hold! (Twin 2 freezes again.) For transparency's sake, some notes from the playwright-maybe I did take a bit too many artistic liberties with the depiction of the day I was born. I was *trying* to give the protagonist of the story a grand entrance into the world, but clearly some people have no respect for artfully-told exposition.

I suppose we can just skip the first few scenes if Queen of the Hellscape 1592 over there is just going to interrupt me every time I tried to bend the truth a little. I've also been toying with using a more contemporary style of playwriting in some of the later scenes anyway, so if poetic language is just so painful to have to process, I suppose we can focus on those scenes for now. I also, obviously, have better memory for the later events, so hopefully it will be accurate enough for those unnecessarily critical among us. I wasn't planning on having to perform this so soon, I thought I'd have more time to refine the script!

FAUST

You've literally been here for almost five-hundred years.

KIT

(Over the bullshit.) And as ANY WRITER in the audience would tell you, we can EASILY SPEND THAT LONG WORKING ON THE SAME THING.

FAUST

You're being really defensive, I was just trying to help.

KIT

Oh my god, thanks so much! Cause the first person I always want to seek advice from is someone who would literally sell their soul to the devil to feel like an alpha male.

FAUST

Rude! You made me this way!

KIT

Exactly, so how about you don't tell me how to write and I won't tell you how to be a self-righteous prick?

FAUST

You're the worst!

KIT

That can only hurt someone if they care what you think of them, Faustypie!

FAUST

(Exasperated grunt/groan/scream)

KIT

(Turning back to the audience) Now, back to the task at hand.

Since we're (directed at FAUST) *apparently going to be skipping the first few scenes*, (back to the audience) allow me to provide some sparknotes on my childhood so you understand where we're about to drop in. We've established the setting: Canterbury Parish, 1560s. Below-average middle class family. My father, John Marlowe, was a cobbler with a drinking problem. For all intents and purposes, he bought my mother, Katherine's, hand in marriage. The first time she met him was on their wedding day, and he proceeded to repeatedly force her through the trauma of childbirth until she had a son that survived childhood. The stuff rom-coms are made of, truly.

My mother was one of the most gentle, caring women I have ever known. She had *nine* children throughout her life, with only six of us living past the age of six. I was her second child, but her first boy, so by Elizabethan standards I might as well have been her first. My older sister, Mary, died when she was six and I was four, so I don't remember her. She then proceeded to have four more girls after me. She didn't have another boy until I was twelve years old. But, the damage had been done by that point in terms of how I viewed myself. So, for the majority of my childhood, I was the eldest child, and the only boy, which means I what? (Waits approximately one second for a response from the audience) Thought I was God, precisely. I practically turned our home into a microcosm of the entire feudal economic system. I was the landlord, my sisters were serfs, and I ruled with an iron fist. It's not that I didn't like my sisters, they were my first friends! I was just conditioned to believe I was important than them, and I behaved accordingly.

This behavior was only enabled the fact that, because I was the only boy, the majority of my family's resources were directed towards me and funding my education. I showed curiosity and intellect from a very young age. I was fascinated by the stars. I was positively a sponge for Greek and Latin! For the first fourteen years of my life, I either taught myself or received an occasional lesson from a county clerk who so graciously taught some of the peasantry in order to ensure religious uniformity across all of Great Britannia. You can see how well that went.

Now, as we all know, what are some of rich people's favorite ways to justify hoarding positively immoral amounts of money? ***If the audience seems willing, maybe take a few responses. Depending on what responses you get, transition back with-*** Precisely, presentational philanthropy to keep the poor pacified. The Crown was certainly no exception to this practice! I daresay they originated it! I became the beneficiary of such an emblematic endowment at the age of fourteen. You see, while he wasn't busy bedding and beheading women, Henry VIII granted the Canterbury Cathedral a charter that founded a school for boys, the King's School. A name that *drips* with imagination. One of the clauses of

the charter required the school admit fifty "poor boys" who showed promise as "possessions of the church." (Knowing side-eye to audience) The school was for boys ages nine through fourteen, and I didn't get off the waiting list until two months before I turned fifteen. I was coming in late in the game, and I knew the odds were stacked against me, but I knew I was smart enough to make it work. ...That was gross, remind me to never talk in sports metaphors again.

Anywho, it was definitely a culture shock. I went from being a big fish in a small pond, to a fabulous little rainbow fish who was swimming with sharks and thought it was the same size as them. I was surrounded by boys from the richest families whose egos were even bigger than mine. I may have had a bit too much gusto going in, but it's not my fault I was obviously smarter than all of them put together. Which brings us to our next scene! Oh Winifaust Sanderson!

FAUST

What was the point of skipping those scenes if you were gonna spend five hours talking about them anyway?

KIT

To spite you.

FAUST

Ok I'm leaving. I don't wanna do this anymore.

KIT

Oh ho ho, you're not going anywhere! It's time to set up for the next scene!

End of Scene 2.

(Transition)

Scene 3

(It looks as if daylight has flooded the stage. Kit sits at the desk reading or writing, occupying himself in some academic fashion. Sounds of young boys playing can be heard in the distance. TWIN 1 enters, portraying a snobby rich boy.)

TWIN 1

(RP for the whole scene.) Ah, the sodden-witted peasant is spending his free time studying so he can be smart enough that people forget he's a sodden-witted peasant.

KIT

(OP for the whole scene.) People may forget that I am a peasant one day, but they will never forget the way the sight of your face made their stomach turn.

TWIN 1

Excuse me?

KIT

And if I were you, I would take care to insult other people's intelligences, lest it call attention to the fact that *your* lack of wit somehow outmatches the excess of foul aromas you radiate.

TWIN 1

(Defensive) I'm sure I would take offense to whatever you just said if I understood a word of it. You sound like all the boorish tradesmen your mother probably whores herself out to.

(KIT launches at TWIN 1, immediately pinning him to the ground. The two tussle back and forth for a minute before TWIN 2 enters as Headmaster Gresshop.)

TWIN 2

(RP for the whole scene.) What's going on here? You two stop that this instant!

(The two push the other off and instantly stand up.)

TWIN 1 AND KIT

Yes, Headmaster Gresshop. Apologies, Headmaster Gresshop.

TWIN 2

May the Heavenly Father forgive you both your transgressions. You (at TWIN 1)- go back outside with the other boys. You (at KIT)- come with me.

KIT

But sir, I didn't do anything! He-

TWIN 2

Mr. Marlowe! That was a directive, not an invitation. Come.

(TWIN 2 and KIT walk together as the stage transitions to Headmaster Gresshop's library.)

KIT

Headmaster Gresshop-

TWIN 2

What are your opinions on the classics, Mr. Marlowe?

KIT

...what?

TWIN 2

The Greeks. The Romans.

KIT

... I find their philosophies to be dry, hyper-intellectual attempts at insightfulness. But I very much enjoy reading Aristotle's work on the stars.

TWIN 2

Have you ever read any of their plays?

KIT

No, sir.

TWIN 2

(Grabbing one off the shelf.) Here, a volume of Sophocles' tragedies.

KIT

With all due respect, sir, I don't quite enjoy theatre. The plays during church festivals were always incredibly dull to me.

TWIN 2

These are decidedly different from those. I think you will enjoy them. You seem to have quite a flair for dramatics.

KIT

Thank you, sir?

TWIN 2

You do not hesitate to speak your mind, do you Mr. Marlowe?

KIT

That's what I've been told, sir.

TWIN 2

And do you think that's why we keep having instances like this with you and your schoolmates?

KIT

I suppose so, sir. The other boys who come from poor families don't like me, they say I act too much like one of the boys from wealthy families. The boys from wealthy families don't like me because they say I'm too arrogant for a person from a poor family.

TWIN 2

So then you are stuck in the middle, it would seem.

KIT

I suppose, sir.

TWIN 2

(Taking on an air of hollow sternness) Well, Mr. Marlowe, since it is very clear you cannot be trusted around your fellow students outside of the classroom, you are ordered to come here during all recreational periods for strict supervision. (The air fading) You can tell me your thoughts on Sophocles.

KIT

(Picking up on it) As you say, sir.

TWIN 2

You have promise, Mr. Marlowe. Your intelligence exceeds some of the boys your age who have been here for five years.

(TWIN 1 appears on the other side of KIT, without him realizing. TWIN 1 is John Marlowe again, and is very obviously inebriated.)

TWIN 1

(OP.) You think you're so smart, don't you.

(KIT looks over his shoulder to see TWIN 1, and tries to dismiss them by reengaging with TWIN 2.)

KIT

Thank you, Headmaster Gresshop.

TWIN 2

I want to help you cultivate that intelligence. But, if you want to follow your ambitions up the ranks of society, you are going to need people to take you seriously. Giving in to your base instincts is not the way to do that, you have to rise above them. There is power in restraint. (Teasing) As well as some better elocution.

TWIN 1

You think you're better than me.

KIT

(Trying to keep TWIN 1 blocked out) I will try, Headmaster.

TWIN 2

I believe you are destined for greatness, Mr. Marlowe. But, you have to respect yourself enough to believe that as well, and take greater care with your behavior to ensure that it can happen.

KIT

Thank you, Headmaster.

TWIN 1

(Violent) I am your father, and you will respect me!

(TWIN 1's line causes an instant shift in the scene. We are in the Marlowe's home, TWIN 2 is now Katherine Marlowe again. TWIN 1 has thrown KIT to the ground.)

TWIN 2

(OP.) John, stop! He did nothing wrong!

TWIN 1

Do I need to teach you to respect me too, woman? (TWIN 1 pushes TWIN 2 to the ground. TWIN 1 turns back to KIT.) You think I don't see the looks you give me? You think just because you sit around reading and writing all day and I don't I'm some kind of fool? Well let me tell you something boy- you can go off to whatever fancy school you want to, but you're still going to be the same person underneath. No matter what you learn, no matter who you pretend to be, you're still going to be what you are now. A snide, weak little piece of shit from the gutter. You better thank your lucky stars you're going off to a school, because you could never survive in *my* world. That requires the strength of a real man. Something you're never going to be!

(TWIN 1 begins to draw his hand back. KIT who has been stunned into silence this whole time suddenly remembers himself)

KIT

Hold! Hold, hold. Stop. Faust! Why did that just happen?

FAUST

Why did what just happen?

KIT

Why did the twins just start reenacting that moment? First of all, I didn't include it in the play! And, that happened the night before my first day at King's, which was well before my first conversation with Headmaster Gresshop! Why did we go backwards to a scene I hadn't even written???

FAUST

Oh, yeah, I did that.

KIT

(Confusion, disbelief, anger) What?

FAUST

Couldn't help but notice the dramatic parallels.

KIT

What are you talking about?

FAUST

You know, male authority figures. Daddy issues...

KIT

I do not have daddy issues! Headmaster Gresshop was one of the best men I ever knew, so do not try to reduce my mentorship with him to some substitute daddy position. He helped me fall in love with theatre. He taught me how to truly read and appreciate a poem. He showed me how to be taken seriously in this world, for god's sake! This is my play. It is not up to you what parts do or do not get included, so stop interfering.

FAUST

So you just want all these people to think you were perfect and your life was perfect?

KIT

YES! That is literally the point of all of this! To show these people how great I am so I can finally get the recognition I deserve! (Turns away from FAUST)

FAUST

("uM, ActUaLlY") It's actually much more engaging for audiences to watch someone struggle. If everything is perfect they have nothing to root for.

KIT

(Whipping around) Will you shut up and go back to your post? You are on thin ice. (Yelling at FAUST as he exits) THIN, FROZEN LAKE IN THE NINTH CIRCLE OF HELL FUCKING ICE.

FAUST

(As he exits) I would absolutely rather be there!

KIT

(Exasperated scream, then a moment to compose.) I would say that bitch is gonna drive me to an early grave but I'm already dead. Sorry you all had to see that. I hope you're all ok. Whew, so. Anyway... (trying to regain equilibrium) Let's get back to the play. Like I said, my time at King's was incredibly short, so there isn't much else to show with what happened there. I basically spent the whole time tearing through the headmaster's library. So where shall we jump to next... ah yes, college!

I title this next chapter of my life, "Boys and Tobacco." This is, of course, a reference to one of my more well-known statements, 'All they that love not tobacco and boys are fools.' All the words I put out into the world, and those are the ones history chose to single out? They didn't even age well! I would never go near tobacco now. I am very aware, however, that a

statement such as that would be Nancy Raegan's worst nightmare, which I take *great* pride in.

Many incredibly important things happened while I was in college. I started writing plays, I realized I was gay, and I got conscripted as an agent of espionage for the Crown. Not necessarily in that order, though...

Transition.

End of Scene 3.

Scene 4

(Fall 1581. The sound of the wind blowing and leaves rustling can be heard. The glow of a late autumn afternoon.)

KIT

Ah, campus in the fall. I began at Corpus Christi in the early 1580s. As with King's School, however, I needed some financial support. I have always depended on the kindness of strangers. This time, it didn't come from the crown, but instead from the wealthy Archbishop Parker. Being a Parker Scholar, as the recipients of his grants came to be known, was an incredibly high honor. It put a lot of attention on you, most of the time in good ways. But, it allowed me the opportunity to continue my studies and devote much more time to my writing than I was at King's, so I was grateful. However, just to be sure we didn't forget our places, us peasants who had managed to claw our way into high academia were dormed in a converted storehouse. So that was fun.

As is usually the case with scholarships, there were a ton of terms and conditions attached to it. The college had allowed me to start attending on the understanding that I was a Parker Scholar, but there was a mix-up and through a series of unfortunate events, I ended up finding myself with nearly no money within my first year of study. The school didn't kick me out immediately, but if I didn't find a way to pay for my studies soon they would have no choice. So, imagine my confusion and excitement when, one day, as I'm walking around Cambridge lamenting my inevitable bankruptcy, this should happen-

(TWIN 1 appears as Nicholas Faunt)

TWIN 1

(RP for the whole scene) Hello, Mr. Marlowe.

KIT

(RP for the whole scene) ...Hello... I'm sorry, do I know you?

TWIN 1

No, you do not. My name is Nicholas Faunt. (Extends hand for handshake)

KIT

(Handshake) Pleased to make your acquaintance, sir.

TWIN 1

Ah, but the pleasure is all mine!

KIT

Far be it from me to disagree with you sir, but if I may ask- how do you know who I am?

TWIN 1

(Laughing) There's that wit we've heard so much about!

KIT

Who is "we?"

TWIN 1

Word of your writing prowess and intellect has become of interest to some very important people, Mr Marlowe. My commander was quite impressed by your translations of Ovid's work.

KIT

How did your commander read them? They haven't been published yet.

TWIN 1

You needn't worry about details such as that. What concerns you is that he would like to provide you with an opportunity that would alleviate some of the monetary issues we understand you are having in your studies.

KIT

What kind of opportunity?

TWIN 1

Not one that can be discussed in public. (Hands KIT a piece of paper.) If you are interested, meet me there and my commander will explain it all to you. Good day, Mr. Marlowe. (Starts to walk away) Oh, and Mr. Marlowe, it is in your best interest to not tell anyone we met or where you are going should you decide to take advantage of this offer.

KIT

Good day, Mr. Faunt.

(Back to the audience) After that meeting, which wasn't unnerving at all, I continued to wander around Cambridge. After being lost in my thoughts for a little while, I remembered the piece of paper Faunt handed me was in my hand and I unfolded it. The only thing written on it was an address on, I kid you not, Seething Lane. But I was a desperate college student with nothing to lose, so the next day I snuck off to find out what was going on. When I arrived at the address, I was greeted by Faunt at the door. He proceeds to take me back through the dark hallways of this house to a room that looked like a study. He told me to wait there and his commander would be coming to speak with me shortly. So I did, and made peace with the fact that it was very likely I was about to die. A few moments later, a very well dressed man came in.

(TWIN 1 enters as Sir Francis Walsingham.)

TWIN 1

(RP for the whole scene) Mr. Marlowe! So nice to finally meet you. I am Sir Francis Walsingham.

(KIT is floored. He turns toward the audience.)

KIT

For those of you who slept through European history, this man was a legend. He was Queen Elizabeth's Secretary of State for seventeen years! That man successfully hunted down and dealt with everyone who wished so much as a cold on the Queen. If it weren't for him, Mary, Queen of Scots would have made it to the end of

her life with her head still attached to her body! Granted, that hadn't happened yet when I met him, but I really wanted to use that example.

(Turns back to TWIN 1) Sir Walsingham, what can I do for you?

TWIN 1

Mr. Marlowe, I trust you are aware of the threat that Roman Catholics pose to the life of our Queen?

KIT

Somewhat, sir. I am aware they support Mary Queen of Scots.

TWIN 1

Yes, yes they do. And they are willing to do whatever it takes to get her on the English throne. We have already had to thwart multiple assassination attempts from them.

KIT

My goodness, sir. I had no idea.

TWIN 1

Yes, quite a ruthless bunch. But, you can help keep our Monarch safe. That is why I have brought you here today.

KIT

How, sir?

TWIN 1

As the Queen's secretary of state, one of my jobs is to manage a group of individuals who act as surveillance agents for the Crown amongst the people. They gather information that is necessary to maintaining the safety of the Queen, or sometimes simply information that Her Majesty needs to know for the good of the country. As you are at a college that trains the clergy, I have reason to believe there are Catholic sympathizers among you who could be helping plan assassination plots against Queen Elizabeth. Colleges have become such breeding grounds for... radicalists recently.

KIT

Absolutely, sir.

TWIN 1

If you should agree to work for me, this could turn into quite a lucrative career for you. The reward for protecting the Queen is quite handsome. You would be working amongst some of the most important people in England. If you prove to be apt for this position, I could use someone of your intelligence for investigations throughout Europe. What do you say, my boy?

KIT

That sounds wonderful sir, I would love to be of service any way I can.

TWIN 1

Good, I knew you would make the reasonable decision. We would have had to kill you if you didn't! (Old rich white man laugh)

KIT

(Nervous laughter) Good jest, sir.

TWIN 1

(Laughter stops immediately) That wasn't a joke at all.

KIT

Yes, sir, I figured as much. So... how is this all going to work?

TWIN 1

Faunt will explain it to you on your way out. Welcome aboard, Mr. Marlowe.

KIT

Thank you, sir.

(Back to the audience) And thus began my life of espionage. It started out rather simple. I would observe my fellow students, see if anyone exhibited any particularly suspicious behavior, said anything they shouldn't, etc. Sometimes I would receive a

tip from Faunt that there was a specific person Sir Walsingham wanted me to watch. If I caught anything, I reported it back to Seething Lane. The individuals who were the subject of such communications would then go missing under mysterious circumstances or unfortunately get mugged, stabbed, and left for dead on the way home from a tavern one night.

Was playing spy every now and then fun? Of course. But what was most important to me was that it allowed me to continue my studies. Being in the Arts program at Corpus meant I got to study all the different corners of human thought and expression. I was surrounded by people not just in my school, but throughout all of Cambridge, who were partaking in an exciting exchange of ideas on the nature of power, religion, and so many other things I had never seen people view analytically before. It even inspired me to start some of my own writing on these ideas that would eventually become my plays. However, the development of that writing was about to take a slight pause.

Transition.

End of Scene 4.

Scene 5

(Seething Lane. TWIN 2 sits at the desk as Thomas Walsingham, working. KIT approaches.)

KIT

(RP the whole scene when engaged with TWINS.) Hello? I'm looking for Sir Thomas Walsingham.

TWIN 2

(RP the whole scene) Is that you, Marlowe?

KIT

My friend, polite conversational convention generally dictates that when someone poses a question to you, you answer it before posing one yourself. So you shall get your answer as soon as I receive mine and know who I am talking to.

TWIN 2

The reputation of your wit precedes you! I can see how you have done quite well in this field. Yes, I am Thomas Walsingham.

KIT

In that case, I am the Marlowe you have heard of. Sir Francis sent me to you.

TWIN 2

Yes, he told me you would be coming. My cousin seems to think you are ready to take on higher levels of responsibility.

KIT

Well, sir, at risk of sounding arrogant-

TWIN 2

(Playful banter) Oh, I think you are well beyond that Mr. Marlowe.

KIT

(Caught off guard) Excuse me?

TWIN 2

(Moving from banter to flirting) However, I can think of few people such as you with qualities that actually merit arrogance.

KIT

(Aside to the audience) It was in this meeting that something I had suspected about myself for a long time was confirmed beyond a shadow of a doubt. I am a flaming homosexual. Suddenly, memories from throughout my life of appreciating male beauty, coupled with pangs of shame, came flooding back. I was also compelled to consider how easy it had been for me in my writing to write about loving a man for my female characters...

Which, actually, brings up something I've wanted to address that's come up recently. (To TWIN 2) Pardon me for a moment, I need to briefly rant at the audience. (Returning to audience) It has recently begun to drive students of the arts, specifically queer ones, insane how queer-baity certain works of we-all-know-whose can be. Hamlet and Horatio, Mercutio, Duke Orsino, all these characters that leave a faint scent of fruit in the air. So these poor people drive themselves insane analyzing these pieces within an inch of their lives to try and find some representation of themselves. Two things- First, there is no subtext in that man's plays. He had the emotional intelligence of a rock. Second, you know who has been trying to give you all the queer Elizabethan theatre you desire? Me! I don't bait you at all! My plays are openly and unapologetically gay as hell! Listen to this (goes over to the desk and picks up a book) -

"For now my lord the king regards me not,
But dotes upon the love of Gaveston:
He claps his cheeks, and hangs about his neck,
Smiles in his face, and whispers in his ears;
And, when I come, he frowns, as who should say,
'Go whither thou wilt, seeing I have Gaveston.'"

That is a real line, from a real play that I wrote in Elizabethan England, that the character of the Queen says about her husband, King Edward II. I gave you all a treasure trove of classical

homoerotic content! It's just sitting there, waiting for you! Take advantage of it like Edward wants to take advantage of Gaveston! Rant over.

(TWIN 2 instantly resumes the scene)

TWIN 2

But my apologies, I interrupted you. What were you going to say?

KIT

(Bashful) Oh, uh... I can't remember.

TWIN 2

You said "At risk of sounding arrogant..."

KIT

Oh, yes! I was just going to say I feel I have proven myself and feel ready to take on more responsibility.

TWIN 2

Wonderful! In that case, my cousin has put me in charge of managing cases that we will be sending you abroad for.

KIT

(Awkwardly trying too hard) Oh, how exciting! "Join the Queen's ring of spies, see the world."

TWIN 2

Pardon me?

KIT

Nothing, it was just a joke. (Redirecting conversation as quickly as possible) So! I'll be working under you now? I mean for!

TWIN 2

(Laughing subtly) Yes, if you don't mind.

KIT

Not at all! Looking forward to it!

TWIN 2

As am I.

KIT

(Back to the audience.) And thus began the golden years of my life. I ended up taking a bit longer than most to finish my degree at Corpus because I started having to take pretty regular leaves of absence to go around Europe on espionage work. But more work meant more time with Thomas, and as the missions the Queen wanted me to accomplish were more and more dangerous-

(TWIN 1 steps forward as Queen Elizabeth)

TWIN 1

(In RP, but make it your best Judi Dench) Send the peasant to France, Spain, and Normandy. I think they're all plotting against me, and we must ensure no one takes England from us. On a completely unrelated note, how are those plans for colonies in the New World coming along?

KIT

- Thomas began to appear more and more concerned for my safety, but not just in a "protecting an employee cause you don't feel like having to train someone new" kinda way-

TWIN 2

I want you to write me a letter every day so I know you're still alive.

KIT

Thomas. If I'm sending you a letter from a remote corner of France, by the time it reaches you, I might as well just hand deliver it! Also, isn't daily communication like that between us the exact kind of thing that could blow my cover?

TWIN 2

You don't always have to be right, you know?

KIT

(Turning back to the audience) Without us ever really needing to say anything, we both realized what we were to each other. Let's just say things started happening between us. But I'm not gonna tell you about that, a good girl never kisses and tells.

After I did foreign missions like that for a little while, the time in between them started widening and I was able to finish my degree and return to my writing. The popularity of theatrical performances was on the rise, and I knew I wanted to be a part of it. It felt like all of them were missing something to me. I started to think of all the epic poems I had read throughout my life and how impactful all of them were. What made them that way? The beauty of the language. That's what all these plays were missing! So I thought of a story that reminded me of an epic poem: *Tamburlaine*. The bloody tale of a shepherd who became the emperor of the Persian Empire. I took everything I loved about poetry- the meter, the structure, the elevated language- and I wove it through dramatic storytelling. When it was done, I offered it up to one of the best acting troupes in London- the Admiral's Men. After some convincing on my and my fellow playwrights' parts to convince them to try out this new style of performance, they agreed. The audience hung on every word. It quickly became one of their, and it launched the careers of many of the actors involved. Next thing you know, every other playwright in London is incorporating verse into their plays. So, no matter what your English teachers told you, I was the first playwright to elevate iambic pentameter to have a place in dramatic storytelling and set the standard for Elizabethan theatre. Following the success of *Tamburlaine*, acting troupes were clamoring to do my plays. So I kept writing. Some of my works were more well-received than others, but I had made a name for myself. All things considered, my life was great! I had a side-hustle that was funding my creative exploits where the person in charge of handling me, something Thomas was very good at, was also the love of my life. Sure, Queen Elizabeth had

practically turned London into a police state, but what's all that to a man in love? ... I was also kinda contributing to that, so what right did I have to complain?

Transition.

End of Scene 5.

Scene 6

KIT

Gentlefolk of the audience, we now arrive at what would be the final scene of this play. But I can't write it, because I don't know why I died. I mean, I know how, my last memory of earth is a dagger coming at my face, which kind of gives it away. But I don't know why it happened. Well, I kinda do cause I had just sliced him in the head twice, but he completely overreacted and some shady shit was going down at the time! So, my friends, here is what I suppose we do- I tell you all about the events that led up to my death, the theories I have come up with out of that information, and then you can help me decide which sounds the most plausible. Then maybe I can finally finish this play. Shall we do that? (Actually waits for a response this time) Wonderful. This is gonna be a lot of information, and involves half the population of England. Let's start with where it all ended, then go back to the beginning and take all possible paths to their inevitable conclusion.

The setting, the home of Dame Eleanor Bull. May the 30th, 1593. The players: Robert Poley, one of her majesty's favorite henchmen, Ingram Frizer, Thomas's devoted right hand man, Nicholas Skeres, who had multiple dubious forms of connections to the other two, and yours truly. Due to our limited resources, this scene will just be featuring Poley and Frizer. Gird your loins, and prepare thyselfes! I present to you, "The Reckoning: A Choose Your Own Adventure Murder Mystery."

(Transition to the room in Dame Bull's house. KIT lays on the desk as if it is the bed in the room. TWIN 1 plays Frizer, TWIN 2 plays Poley. They sit with their backs to KIT. The three move through the fight sequence in slow motion, making adults in *Charlie Brown*-esque, indistinct sounds. Just as KIT is about to get stabbed, everyone freezes.)

KIT

(From the tableau) Got it? (Breaking out of tableau) Sorry, I was rather inebriated in that moment so I don't remember exactly what

words were exchanged... Which I suppose would be helpful in terms of establishing motive... But I bet you're all wondering what got us to that moment now! So let's begin our investigation. There is one theory surrounding my death I can dismiss right away, as much as it would be nice if it was true. Some believe that isn't how I died and that I went into exile, beginning a new life somewhere else. It was almost true, though, but we'll get into that in a little while.

The backdrop for all of this, and the reason so many obvious oversights in the investigation of my death were ignored, was the London Plague of 1592-1593. Tensions in London were incredibly high. As rich people are want to do when shit hits the fan in highly-populated areas, they all fled the city to their country estates, which I also did so who am I to judge? I went to Thomas' country manor with his family. But, when they leave, they take their money with them. Meaning, on top of a plague, the city of London gets launched into a recession. The merchants of London were, understandably, not happy about that, and wanted someone to blame. At midnight on May 5, a notice got pinned to the wall of the Dutch church's yard. It made vicious, anti-semitic death threats against all the immigrant merchants. It was fifty three lines long, written in verse, and signed "per Tamburlaine," as well as making reference to my most recent work at the time, *The Massacre at Paris*. Desperate for an excuse to come after all of us, the Queen's Privy Council used this as justification to authorize the torture of writers. The first one they went after was Thomas Kyd, an old friend of mine from college I had shared a room with to escape the converted storeroom..

They arrested Kyd on the 11th. He was still in the room I had shared with him, and they found some of my papers that had gotten shuffled in with his. They were pages I had been reading for discussion with my fellow members of the School of Night. That was a group of atheist, subversive, academics and nobles I may or may not have been involved in, but that's a story for another time. Come back and visit me again for that one. In any event, these papers were selected passages from a text that questioned Christ's divinity. They tortured him for three days before he

finally cracked. He said the papers were mine, that I was a blasphemous traitor who believed that Jesus was a homosexual, and that I was a heretic who actively tried on multiple occasions to turn people towards atheism. Could he have just said the papers were mine and ended it there? Preferably. Also, you make one joke once about it being kind of suspicious that a church that condemns homosexuality was started by a group of thirteen guys who went everywhere together, and suddenly people are accusing you of calling Jesus gay. I can't be mad at Kyd though, I would have done the exact same thing had I been in his place. By May 18th, a warrant had been issued for my arrest. On May 20th, I was arrested and brought before the Privy Council.

(TWIN 1 steps forward as the clerk of the Council.)

TWIN 1

(RP for whole scene) Now, Mr. Marlowe, we have little reason to believe you are responsible for the bill that was hung on the Dutch church's gate as you have been staying in the countryside at Scadbury Manor, correct?

KIT

(RP for the whole scene) Yes, my lord. With my patron, Sir Thomas Walsingham.

TWIN 1

Very good. What we principally must address, then, is the accusation of heresy being brought against you. Do you recognize these papers? (Shows Kit the pages found in Kyd's room)

KIT

Yes, my lord.

TWIN 1

(Having gotten the answer he expected) Mr. Marlowe, you are aware that actions such as these which defame the authority of God, and subsequently our Queen, are punishable by death. However, because of the valuable service you provide the Crown, we shall grant some leniency. An indemnity must be paid as your bail, and you

must appear before a member of this council daily so that we may monitor your behavior. You may go now.

KIT

(Surprised) Thank you, my lord.

(Back to the audience. Drop OP.) I was *shocked* that they let me off that easily. Too easy, one might think... Which brings us to Theory #1: That Hateful Bitch Elizabeth. While historians claim there is no official evidence the Queen had anything to do with my death, they never met her. They never saw how she operated first-hand. I did. The slightest little thing could unleash that woman's unbridled rage, and she never liked me. So, let's dive into the evidence that connects the Crown to my untimely demise.

First of all, there's the timeline of it all. I get brought before her closest advisors May 20th, get released relatively scot free from something I should have been burned at the stake for, and then ten days later get killed in the presence of one of her top government agents, Robert Poley? That sly woman knew she couldn't have me executed at the behest of the Crown, that might bring too much attention to my connection to her. I knew too much. They wanted to keep a leash on me long enough to get rid of me without causing a scene.

The most damning evidence for our dear Lizzy, however, is the coroner's inquest into my death. It was done by William Danby, coroner to the Queen's Household. Which was technically illegal, because it should have been done by the county's coroner. However, the Crown had a loophole for that law that they loved to use when it came to deaths they wanted to cover up. *Infra virgam!* Meaning "within the verge," this handy-dandy little provision allowed the Crown to have their coroner investigate deaths that occurred within a twelve mile radius of the sovereign's physical presence. And wouldn't you know it, she just so happened to be at Nonsuch Palace, a palace that up until the 1590s she had hardly spent any time in, which just so happened to be within a twelve mile radius of the spot where I died. Again, in the presence of one of her most trusted agents. Now, I'm not a spiritual person,

but even if I did believe in fate or some kind of grand design by an omnipotent being, that all just seems a bit too convenient, now doesn't it?

But anyway, back to the inquest. It is famously deficient, leaving everyone who read it with more questions than answers. First of all, the only people Danby spoke to were the three other men who were in the room. And he didn't even get all the information he should have from them! He didn't ask them why the four of us were there that day, he didn't ask about any of the other events of that day, nothing. He didn't talk to Dame Bull, he didn't talk to any of the servants, he didn't even have someone who wasn't in the room come and identify my corpse! I can obviously confirm that it was me, but I just slide that in to prove how easy it was for the Crown to cover up a death if they wanted to. He just accepted the story three men *engaged with government funded espionage* gave him, wrote up his little report, and sent my body off to an unmarked grave. Anywho, that's that theory, do with it what you will.

So, after my little tête-à-tête with the Privy Council, I returned to Scadbury Manor. And Thomas being Thomas, he was a bit frantic.

TWIN 2

(RP for the whole scene) Kit, thank God! We need to get you out of the country.

KIT

(RP for the whole scene) Hello to you too, my serene little lambkin, does it have to be now or do we have time for a drink first?

TWIN 2

Kit, you should be taking this seriously!

KIT

Taking what seriously???

TWIN 2

You had to appear before the Privy Council!

KIT

Yes, as I have done many times before!

TWIN 2

As their agent, not charged with heresy!

KIT

My love! Calm yourself! They barely gave me a slap on the wrist! Everything is fine.

TWIN 2

I had to sit here and wonder if you were still alive. And everything certainly didn't feel fine then, and I would like to never feel that way again. I don't care for the way the winds are blowing, so before the Queen or her officers change their minds about you, I want to get you to safety.

KIT

I know how to handle those people, darling, I've worked for them for ten years. There's nothing to fear. (Goes to embrace TWIN 2)

TWIN 2

(Stepping back from KIT) Kit, I'm serious.

KIT

Thomas, are you truly this frightened?

TWIN 2

Yes (emotions well up), I cannot bear the thought of losing you.

KIT

(Going to comfort him) Alright, my love, alright. If you are truly this concerned, I trust you. But how can I leave the country? The Privy Council is watching my every move.

TWIN 2

I've come up with a plan. On the 23rd, I'm going to have Frizer take you to Dame Bull's house in Deptford. I've reserved a room for you there because it's close to the river. You will spend the day there, and as soon as night falls you will be retrieved from the house and taken to a merchant I know that will give you passage to the coast. Once at the coast, he will help you board a ship that is bound for France.

KIT

(Somewhat stunned) You've thought this through quite thoroughly, haven't you?

TWIN 2

There isn't any room for error. Besides, it's not as if I haven't had to help you inconspicuously leave the country before.

KIT

Fair point! (The two share a laugh together) Thank you for being so concerned for me.

TWIN 2

Of course. Now I'll let you recover from your journey and prepare for your next. I told Audrey I'd go for a walk with her through the gardens this afternoon.

KIT

Ah, yes, you must keep the madam happy.

TWIN 2

You know I'd spend all my time with you if I could.

KIT

I do.

TWIN 2

I'll come check on you later, alright?

KIT

Alright.

(TWIN 2 steps away from KIT, begins conversing with TWIN 1 on the other side of the stage in the shadows. KIT, assuming he is alone with the audience again-)

KIT

This gives me the perfect opportunity to present Theory #2: The Jealous Wife. There are some who believe, and frankly I see the plausibility in this, that Thomas' wife Audrey grew jealous of our relationship and conscripted Frizer to have me killed so she could have Thomas all to herself. Do I have any evidence to support this theory? No. However-

(The lights come up on the TWINS on the other side of the stage, and their conversation can now be heard.)

TWIN 2

You'll be able to get him there quietly, he believes we're helping him escape. You can not do anything that would make him suspect for a second why you're truly taking him there. This must be kept quiet, Frizer.

TWIN 1

(RP for the whole scene) I shall do my best, sir.

TWIN 2

This isn't a matter where "doing your best" is satisfactory. You must be successful, the Queen wants him taken care of as soon as possible. She has trusted this task to me, so if it fails it's my head that's going to roll.

TWIN 1

Yes, sir. Understood, sir.

TWIN 2

To ensure all goes according to plan, Poley has agreed to be at the house that day as well, and he will be bringing Skeres with

him. I should hope the three of you can handle a childish, arrogant drunkard like Kit Marlowe without failing spectacularly.

TWIN 1

(Laughing) Very good, sir. I trust we will.

(KIT stands there in shock for a moment before giving way to complete and utter rage.)

KIT

Faust! Get the fuck out here!

FAUST

(Complete calm.) Yes?

KIT

Was that another one of your stunts? Because I sure as hell didn't write that, and you can't say you pulled it from my memories either because I didn't witness any conversation remotely like that! I don't even have reason to wonder if that's what happened!

FAUST

Well clearly some part of you believes it did.

KIT

(Defensive) Why on earth would I think that? He never would have done that, he loved me! Thomas was going to help me escape, not arrange for me to be assassinated! I'm over your bullshit for today, Faust. Your services are no longer needed here.

FAUST

That wasn't me.

KIT

What?

FAUST

I wish I could take credit for it, but I can't. That wasn't me.

KIT

Who else could it possibly have been?

TWIN 2

That one was me, actually.

KIT

Since when can you speak for yourself?

TWIN 2

I guess you could say that was what I was doing, but I'm still only using material you gave me.

TWIN 1

That's all any of us are ever doing. If you hadn't thought about yourself or these other people like this at one point or another, we wouldn't have existed to begin with.

KIT

You too? What is this? What's happening?

FAUST

Why don't you tell us? You're the one who controls what happens here.

KIT

I certainly don't feel like that right now!

FAUST

Yeah, being forced to finally accept the truth will do that to you.

KIT

What are you talking about???

FAUST

You know perfectly well! This is what you spent your whole life, and the last five hundred years you've been here, doing! You refuse to accept the truth of what you really are, so you try to

ignore it by writing it away into stories and projecting it onto characters like some kind of pathetic coping mechanism instead of actually dealing with your shit...

TWIN 2

...because you're weak. And lazy. And bitter. And petty. And having to accept all that is just too much for your god complex to deal with, so you hide behind the facade of being some tortured artist.

TWIN 1

When what you actually are is an alcoholic with anger management issues who couldn't even afford to pay for his own addiction because he was actually awful at the one thing he claimed to be good at.

FAUST

I mean, honestly, Kit. Regardless of how you died, doesn't it tell you anything about yourself that so many people wanted you dead? And if even that wasn't enough, how did the reactions to your death not teach you anything? The Queen and her cronies were able to make insanely quick work of destroying what little reputation you had because you gave them all the material they could have hoped for. Instead of grieving you, the people you assumed were your friends used the scandal around your death to make money by doing your plays. Then, as soon as the scandal died down, everyone forgot about you and moved on to the person who somehow managed to outdo you in the one and only contribution to the world you ever made. And you know who's to blame for that? No one but you. Because you knew all along how forgettable you were. You knew you were nothing. People pointed it out to you over and over again, and despite your debilitating need for external validation, you wouldn't listen to them // when they tried to tell you that!

KIT

// Are you fucking kidding me??? Of course I listened to them! Not only did I listen to them, I believed them! So my whole life became about proving all of them wrong! I drove myself insane

trying to become a person that wasn't all the things people told me I was. That wasn't the things I saw in people like my father that were everything I didn't want to be. And you know what, Faust? Maybe you're right. Maybe there were parts of myself that scared me, and I didn't know how to deal with them, so I put them into my plays or my poems. But whether or not I liked them, or was proud of them, or even understood them at all, they were still parts of me. So I turned them into something I could be proud of. But even then, the reactions I got to the parts of myself that were the scariest for me to share with the world confirmed my worst fears. They said I was sick. That my existence was an affront to God. I watched them remove all of those things from sight and erase them from memory until the only thing that was left to remove was me. Then, I end up here. And I have to sit here for five centuries and watch as they erased me from memory and replaced me with someone that was more palatable, more easy to preserve in history in a way that they were comfortable with. So then I start driving myself insane all over again doubting myself. Never experiencing a moment of peace because all I can do is wonder what person I needed to be for people to care about me and why the person I worked so hard to be wasn't that.

I wanted to show the world that you don't need the permission of some religion to experience the divine within yourself. That having insane amounts of power will never be as valuable as seeing the humanity in the people around you. That love, even in a form you may not understand, is the most basic human right and should never be treated as a vice or reason for damnation. But instead, I'm trapped here, helpless, convincing myself that I didn't do any of that, and all I did was prove all of them right. And that is fucking terrifying.

(KIT turns away from FAUST and TWINS. Talks to the audience.)

But god, I am so tired of feeling like this. The constant fear that just eats away at your insides. That makes it impossible for you to trust yourself. You can go through your day acting like you think you're amazing to try and cover it up, but that just ends up making it worse because then you feel like an imposter

and a liar and then you trust yourself even less. And it just gets worse and worse until all you see in yourself are the things other people told you to be afraid of. Then you just become a shell of yourself trying to be what they tell you to be so maybe you can feel less afraid. (A realization) And that is exactly what I've been letting them do to me the whole time I've been stuck here. And they aren't even here! I've just been doing it to myself. So you know what? Fuck it. If the main reason I got killed was because I made people who were committed to living in fear and hatred uncomfortable, I don't care what the specifics were of how they followed through on getting rid of me. That says a lot more about them than it does about me. And if the price of being remembered by history was living like them, it's not worth it. That is not how I want to be remembered. I would rather be remembered by a small number of people as I was, because I'm proud of that person. Genuinely proud.

(The sound of a lock clicking. KIT turns around to look towards the door, and realizes that FAUST and the TWINS are gone. KIT walks across the room towards the door. He gently places his hand on the knob, and turns it. The door opens. Just as KIT is about to step through-)

BLACKOUT.

END OF PLAY.