

SHAG/TOM WINTOUR (SHARPE)

SHAG: I will write your wife whatever you find it in your heart to say – But first – *(and he means this)* I *need to know* what only you know. The true history of the Gunpowder Plot. How did it begin?

TOM: *How did it begin?* You know. *Everyone* knows. It began with a *lie* . . . Write this – *(Then as Shag writes)* It began when Henry VIII wanted a woman-not-his-wife in his bed, and – as being king wasn't enough to get her there – he declared himself *God*.

SHAG: *(Did anyone hear that treason?)* Head of Church. He made himself Head of Church. *(whispering harshly)* Be! Careful!

TOM: Keep writing! It began when people like you started calling a *serial killer* *wives* *Head of a Church*. *(with growing outrage)* It began when men swore Henry's *adultery* was their religion *not* because they believed it but because Those-who-*didn't-swear* had their lands taken away and given to Those-who-*did*. By their *wives* *they swore*, and by their *children*. They swore by *all that was holy* until what-once-was-holy became nothing-but-words and words, even words themselves had lost their meaning.

SHAG: *(recognizing the truth)* And breath became poor and speech unable.

TOM: You've stopped writing. Trust you to carry a letter to my wife? Never!

SHAG: *(With growing anger)* You would have blown up a room full of *husbands* and *fathers* and *sons* and *brothers* and *I'm* a coward?

TOM: You say this is a mad world. Tell me you have never been caught in the madness.

SHAG: Not till now.

TOM: *(amazed)* Who protected you?

SHAG: I'm part of a cooperative venture.

TOM: Who sent you? *What* are you? *(Grabbing Shag's pass)* *Cecil*.

SHAG: I am not his creature.

TOM: If you are not in a jail, you live within his lies.

SHAG: You're young. You're like my daughter. You exaggerate.

TOM: Do I? When was the last time you *shouted* a truth that was *shouting out* within you?

SHAG: I am a *writer*, not a town crier.

TOM: *I* at least have made *my* cry heard.

SHAG: Really? Who heard you?

TOM: *THE KING* or I would not be here. Who heard *you*?

SHAG: *THE KING! I AM HIS PLAYWRIGHT!*

TOM: Then there's blood on your hands, Writer.