

CHARLES. Do you honestly think I've let things drift because I can't be bothered? I'm sitting on the fence because it's the only way to survive. Every signature I leave is like inking my own death warrant. Have you forgotten what happened to my father? I've no intention of signing those. Not one of them. And you can ask me till the dogs have been walked and the cows come home, I'm not signing a damned thing. Maybe my legacy will be one of indecision, maybe. But it's the only way to keep my head. What else can I do? (*Beat.*) And *that* is why I'm seeing my Nell.

*He goes to exit.*

ARLINGTON. Sir?

CHARLES. What?

ARLINGTON. Humour me for a moment.

CHARLES. Oh no.

ARLINGTON. Our alliance with France –

CHARLES. I knew it.

ARLINGTON. Our bond with them is fragile.

CHARLES. Can't we just send them a gift?

ARLINGTON. Like what?

CHARLES. Tennis balls?

ARLINGTON. Sir. We need to forge a link, a 'relationship' if you will. They've brought a lady with them. She's exquisite –

CHARLES. No.

ARLINGTON. *Gentile* –

CHARLES. No.

ARLINGTON. And constantly libidinous.

*Pause.*

CHARLES. I will not take another mistress.

CHARLES *looks at* ARLINGTON. NELL *arrives with two beautiful cloaks.*