

Mary Stuart

Written by Alexander Mackendrick

Sequence 1

Paris watches as the Douglas clansmen, a group of twenty-five armed men, led by the Earl of Morton and Andrew Kerr, enter Holyrood Castle in Edinburgh. Morton and Kerr force the guards to lock the gates behind them.

Paris heads to the home of Bothwell but is prevented from reaching it by Kerr.

Kerr and Morton enter the castle and discuss their plans with Lindsay. It is determined that they have enough men to defend themselves against Bothwell and Huntley. Their co-conspirators are revealed: Darnley (Mary's husband), Ruthven and George Douglas, three men not thought highly of by Kerr.

Lindsay, Kerr and Morton convince Darnley that the job has to be done immediately, and promise that Mary – who is pregnant – will not be harmed. They also tell the impressionable Darnley that the child is not his.

Darnley enters Mary's chambers, followed by Ruthven, Lindsay, Kerr and George Douglas. Kerr aims a pistol at Rizzio, but Mary moves to stand in front of him. George Douglas stabs Rizzio, who is set upon by Ruthven and Lindsay. Lindsay finishes the job by stabbing Rizzio with Darnley's knife.

Morton arrives and makes it clear that he had also wanted Mary killed. He orders her to be locked in her room, and explains that Bothwell and Huntley's forces will soon be arriving. Morton tells Darnley to defuse the situation by informing Bothwell and the growing crowds at the castle gates that Mary is in no danger (even though Darnley scarcely believes this himself). Ruthven locks Mary in her rooms. From a platform above the gates, Morton tells the crowd to return home.

John Knox has been roused and walks towards the castle. Bothwell, though nursing an injury, has already arrived. He is angry with the Provost of Edinburgh, who is doing nothing to prevent violence from taking place inside the castle. The Provost insists he doesn't know for sure what is happening inside. Bothwell tells him that Rizzio has already been killed and Mary will be next.

Bothwell insists that Knox is a supporter of the murderers because Knox has, in the past, attacked Mary. Knox suggests that Bothwell's wounds should be tended to in his home.

Morton announces to the crowd that Mary is safe. Darnley, under duress, also tells the gathered people that his wife is unharmed.

Bothwell tells Paris to ask the conspirators where Moray (Mary's brother) is. Darnley replies that Moray is in England. "Moray is in England. He is a traitor. That was proved." Defeated, Bothwell heads back towards town as Darnley grows ever more worried. He asks Lindsay if Moray is involved in their plan, and whether he has been seen.

At Knox's house, Paris dresses Bothwell's wounds. Bothwell tells Knox that he suspects Moray and Lethington of being involved. Knox tells him that "Moray has been seen just across the border."

Mary, meanwhile, is alone, behind locked doors.

Sequence 2

The Douglas clansmen meet at Kirk o' Field, a mile from the castle. A meeting is in progress involving Morton, George Douglas, Moray, Lethington and others. Lethington's plan is that Moray deny any knowledge of what has happened. He believes Moray is the only person who can persuade Mary to pardon the conspirators. Morton reiterates that they should have killed Mary when they had the chance. Lethington believes that Darnley should be the one to take the blame for everything.

Sequence 3

Mary is locked inside the castle. Lindsay explains to her that Moray has been sent for. Mary's women-in-waiting, including Mary Seton and Fleming, help prepare her for the arrival of Moray and Lethington. Mary tells Seton that she is afraid.

Moray and Lethington enter Mary's chambers and state how glad they are she is unharmed. Mary tells them she is surprised that Morton has let them see her. Moray explains that he insisted upon it, and that Morton will be punished for what he has done. Mary is aware that Morton wants something from her, and everyone but Moray and Mary leave the chambers so the matter can be discussed in private.

On the stairs leading to the antechamber, Lethington and Fleming talk. Fleming reveals that she is spying on Mary for Lethington, but is also afraid for her. Seton goes to Darnley's rooms to give him a message, but he is too drunk to understand. Meanwhile Moray has presented to Mary the pardons he has been given. She asks him his advice as to whether she should sign them, and tells him to leave the documents with her. Moray leaves.

Sequence 4

Seton brings Darnley up to Mary's chambers. Mary shows Darnley the documents. He discovers that his name is not included on the list of conspirators to be pardoned. Mary explains what will happen if she pardons Morton, Ruthven, Lindsay, Kerr and George Douglas: "If I sign that, then I have given them a document which admits that Rizzio was my lover. By this they can claim that my child is born illegitimate. If it is a son, they will challenge his right to the throne." Mary explains she is certain that Lethington and Moray are the authors of the documents. It isn't a pardon for the five conspirators, she says, "it's a weapon with which my brother can discredit me and my heir." Mary asks Darnley if he really thinks the child is not his, and Darnley accepts that it is his. "They had their own reasons for getting rid of your friend Rizzio," he says, "so they told me he was your lover." Darnley says that regardless, he is certain Rizzio was in love with Mary. Mary insists it was nothing but "slander and lies." "That's not the point," says Darnley. "I asked you to get rid of him because they were laughing behind my back, sneering at the way you treated me. You refused! You made it very clear how much you cared about my feelings. You needed Rizzio and had no time for me." Darnley accuses Mary of never really having loved him, but says he will help her in whatever way he can. They embrace.

Sequence 5

Darnley leads Mary, on horseback, out of the castle. The alarm is raised. Morton, furious, discovers that Darnley has led the escape party. Lindsay tries to reassure Morton: "I'm sending troops on every road out of the town." Mary, Darnley and the entourage (including Erskine, the Queen's equerry) are resting by the side of the road. Darnley makes it clear they have to keep moving, but Erskine insists that the pregnant Mary rest. Mary insists that Darnley ride on without them and make contact with Bothwell. He realises that Mary has been using him, and that she only needed him to escape from the castle. The following morning Bothwell arrives. Mary is happy to see him.

Sequence 6

The following day, Morton, Lindsay and Kerr arrive at the castle, headquarters of the Douglas conspirators. "They say that Bothwell and Huntley will be marching on us tomorrow," Fleming says to Lethington. Morton, Lindsay and Kerr enter, furious at Lethington because of Moray's disappearance. "Moray has deserted me as well," says Lethington. "He knows that Mary distrusts me. He's not going to make her any more suspicious than she is already. He'll have told her already that I was the one

who wanted him to arrange for your pardon. By this time he's probably convinced himself that he's been loyal to her from the start. Whether he'll also convince her is another matter." Lethington adds that he thinks the best plan of action for the conspirators is to flee to England.

Sequence 7

Mary's flag flies on the battlements of the castle. Bothwell is preparing for battle, but knows his enemies have already fled. "They're brave lads when it's an attack on a girl or a helpless little Italian. But when there's any real threat you'll see them turn on each other, each one trying to sell the next man's skin."

Moray arrives at the castle and is confronted by Darnley, who insists that Moray was involved in the conspiracy from the start. Moray, denying everything, says he has come because Mary sent a letter requesting his assistance. Bothwell, in an effort to protect Mary, forbids Darnley from seeing her, and reveals that he is the author of the letter to Moray. Bothwell also makes it clear to Moray that evidence of his guilt still persists.

Sequence 8

Mary is in her chambers, in discussion with Huntley. Bothwell enters and makes it clear that he knows about Moray and Lethington's complicity in the murder of Rizzio. He insists that Mary is nonetheless to permit Moray to remain in Scotland because "he can make a sight more trouble for you in England than he can here," explains Bothwell. "Your devoted and affectionate cousin Elizabeth will be happy to support him and march across the border when she has the excuse to 'restore order,' for example." Bothwell adds that Mary might consider pardoning Morton, Ruthven and Lindsay. "Keep all your enemies close to you, where you can watch what they're doing," he advises. Mary seems to be warming to Bothwell, although Seton advises caution: "He is more dangerous than any of the others."

Sequence 9

Some months later. Mary and Darnley are estranged. Darnley has come to the castle to see his child. Bothwell chastises Mary for her coldness to Darnley. "That brat there has a fair chance to be King of Scotland and England both. But only if you keep all your wits about you," he explains. "You're right," says Mary. "But I still can't bear him near me."

Sequence 10

Some months later. Mary and her entourage are relaxing in a garden. Bothwell, Huntley and Paris enter. Bothwell tells Mary that Darnley has been in contact with the Spanish crown and is being pushed to assert himself against his enemies. Mary must divorce Darnley immediately. "I can't divorce him," says Mary. "If I appeal for an annulment you know what it means. It prejudices the child's claim to the throne. I've asked him to help me find some other way, some form of separation that is legal. But he refuses." "Admit it," says Bothwell. "If he fell off his horse and broke his neck tomorrow, he'd do his country a service." Mary turns on Bothwell, telling him that if anything happens to her husband, the criminals will be punished. She tells Bothwell he is a fool and no match for Lethington, and that as "the strongest man in Scotland" he will be the next victim of the conspirators. Despite their angry words there is sexual tension between the two of them.

Sequence 11

John Knox's house, where a drunken Bothwell is in conversation with Knox. Bothwell explains that he must return to the Borders where he has business to attend to: "The Elliots are getting out of hand." Bothwell is introduced to Knox's young wife.

Sequence 12

Bothwell's men ride across the landscape with a bound captive: John Elliott. Elliott attempts to escape and is pursued by Bothwell, who shoots him in the shoulder. Bothwell is stabbed three times by Elliott. Though wounded, Bothwell kills Elliott. At Melrose, Mary is told of Bothwell's injuries. Clearly upset, Mary sends her doctor to Bothwell, whose wounds are not fatal. To everyone's surprise, Mary arrives and sobs at seeing the injured Bothwell. She is clearly in love with him.

Sequence 13

Craigmillar. A new conspiracy is being planned against Darnley by Morton, Ruthven, Lindsay and Huntley. Moray and Lethington arrive. It is believed that Bothwell will not act against them because they have evidence that proves he was involved with the murder of Rizzio. Morton and Lethington agree that Bothwell and Mary are lovers. Darnley has been sick, and Mary has gone to Glasgow to visit him, from where she has been writing letters to Bothwell. Lethington has a copy of one of the letters as proof of Mary's feelings for Bothwell. Mary arrives in Edinburgh with Darnley.

Sequence 14

Holyrood castle. Bothwell's men, including Paris, talk about an impending battle. Mary arrives at the castle, without Darnley. Paris and Bothwell discuss the murder of Darnley. As Mary prepares for bed, Erskine tells her that Darnley, at Kirk o' Field, has been asking for her. That night, while Mary is in bed, a figure enters. The two embrace.

Sequence 15

Kirk o' Field, the following day. Darnley makes it clear to Mary that he knows she is in love with someone else, but will do whatever he can to help her regardless. Outside, Bothwell talks with two of his men who tell him there are thirty barrels of dynamite in the basement of the house at Kirk o' Field. Walking through the grounds of the house, Mary sees Paris, his hands stained with black powder. Meanwhile Bothwell is furiously searching for Paris. An explosion rocks Kirk o' Field. Darnley staggers out of the house and is strangled by an unknown assailant.

Sequence 16

Holyrood castle, the next morning. Mary and Erskine view Darnley's body. Lethington urges Mary to expose and punish the murderer immediately. Mary says that she will take her child to Stirling the next day, and then asks Lethington if he will accompany her. This greatly surprises Lethington. "My mother talked of you before I came to France," says Mary. "She had no great opinion of my brother Moray. She said you were the wise one and he owed his position in Scotland to you. She told me to seek your advice and try to make you my friend. I need your advice now." In conversation with Seton, Mary learns that Bothwell is the chief suspect in Darnley's murder. She believes that soon she will be accused of being Bothwell's accomplice in the crime.

Sequence 17

Bothwell, the Provost, John Knox and others are meeting in the castle. Paris enters with a piece of paper that has been torn from the door of a tollbooth. It is an anonymous message claiming that Bothwell is Darnley's murderer. Bothwell explains that he has offered a reward to anyone with proof that he was involved in the crime, and no one has yet come forward. Knox suggests that even so, it does not disprove the claim. Bothwell tells the Provost he will bring in his own men to assist with the search for the perpetrators. Bothwell makes it clear to Knox that he knows everyone – including Knox – believes him guilty of the crime. Bothwell adds that should Knox preach against Mary from his pulpit, he will incur Bothwell's wrath.

Sequence 18

Mary and Lethington have reached Edinburgh. Lethington makes a convincing case to her that Bothwell is guilty and must be brought to trial. Mary reminds Lethington that when she was held prisoner by Morton, it was Bothwell who saved her. Lethington says that even though Bothwell is undoubtedly in love with her, he is nothing special: "He's been a strong arm to fight your battles, but you'll find a dozen just as reliable. Brute courage and muscle aren't rare in this country. A mind like yours is." At this moment Mary's party is ambushed by Bothwell's men. Bothwell takes Mary with him, saying, "Try to look a bit more terrified, my love. Your honour is in danger, if not your life."

Sequence 19

Holyrood castle. The French Ambassador Du Croc arrives. Lindsay insists that Bothwell is soon to be captured. Lethington explains to du Croc what has happened, that Bothwell killed Darnley as a first step before forcing Mary into marriage. Worried that Bothwell might kill Mary, du Croc offers himself as an intermediary: "As a neutral, may I approach Bothwell and, with your permission, offer him a guarantee that if he disbands his forces, releases Mary unharmed to return to you, then he will be allowed to escape from the country? Much bloodshed will be avoided." Lethington agrees, in the knowledge that Mary will refuse to surrender, and will actually help them capture Bothwell. Morton asks why Mary would do such a thing. Lethington shows him the letters. "Because it's the only way to save her own neck," says Lethington.

Sequence 20

Bothwell's troops are ready for battle. Du Croc approaches with a white flag. Paris tells Mary to stay out of sight. Seton also approaches. Her escort explains: "She came over at her own request to attend the Queen and bring her news of the child." Bothwell talks with du Croc, asking him, "What kind of security is this you're asking for her, to be delivered back into the hands of men who've tried to kill her once already?" Seton tells Mary that she is being accused of being Bothwell's accomplice in the murder of Darnley. Bothwell and Mary talk. "I'm tired of running away. You've no hope of victory," she says. Bothwell tells Mary what du Croc was offering, that Mary be handed over and Bothwell be assured a safe passage to France. "Will Morton receive me as the Queen and promise to protect my child?" asks Mary. "He'll promise you anything you want till he gets his hands on you," replies Bothwell. "If you deliver yourself to him now, you'll never see freedom again!" Mary accuses Bothwell of killing Darnley, a charge he denies, though he admits he was in love with Mary, and wanted Darnley dead. "I want you to arrange for my surrender to Morton," says Mary, who accuses Paris of strangling Darnley. Paris admits his crime. Mary surrenders and rides to Lethington's encampment.

Sequence 21

John Knox and his wife watch as Mary is led through the streets of Edinburgh, surrounded by a mob, to cries of “Murderess!” and “Burn the hoor!” Mary is led into the castle.

MARY STUART

1542 – 1587