



**MARIA  
STUARDA**

**GAETANO  
DONIZETTI**

**SLOVENSKÉ  
NÁRODNÉ  
DIVADLO  
OPERA**



# MARIA STUARDA

**GAETANO DONIZETTI**

1797 – 1848

LIBRETTO

GIUSEPPE BARDARI

BASED ON

FRIEDRICH VON SCHILLER'S

DRAMA MARY STUART

TRAGEDIA LIRICA

IN TWO ACTS IN ITALIAN

WORLD

PREMIÈRE

DECEMBER 30, 1835

TEATRO ALLA SCALA

MILAN

PREMIÈRES

APRIL 21 AND 23, 2023

THE SLOVAK

NATIONAL THEATRE

NEW BUILDING

# **MARIA STUARDA**

**ELIZABETH**

**the Queen of England**

mezzosoprano

**MARY STUART**

**the Queen of Scotland imprisoned in England**

soprano

**ANNA KENNEDY**

**the Nurse of Mary**

mezzosoprano

**ROBERTO**

**Duke of Leicester**

tenor

**LORD GUGLIELMO / VILIAM CECIL**

**Royal Treasurer**

baritone

**GIORGIO TALBOT**

**Duke of Shrewsbury**

bass

**Herold, nobles, ladies-in-waiting,  
relatives of Mary, royal guards,  
pageboys, courtiers, hunters,  
soldiers of Fotheringhay, the sheriff  
and court officials**

**It is set in the Palace of Westminster  
and Fotheringhay Castle.**

# ACT I

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*The gallery in the Palace of Westminster. Knights and ladies returning from a tournament held in honour of the French ambassador form groups before meeting the Queen*

## 1<sup>st</sup> SCENE

I. Choir

LADIES-IN-WAITING

AND KNIGHTS Let's wait here; it won't be long before she returns from the tournament. The Queen of the Brits is a delight to every heart. Oh, what a beautiful day it will be when she graces it with her noble love.

COURTIERS The Queen!  
*(Elizabeth enters.)*

LADIES-IN-WAITING

AND KNIGHTS Yes, Albion will be more beautiful than a star when we see her united with the splendour of France. Rejoicing, we will admire the power of love.

## 2<sup>nd</sup> SCENE

II. Recitative and cavatina

ELIZABETH Yes, the King of France wants the English throne along with my heart. I still doubt it, if I should accept the noble proposal, but if the welfare of

my loyal Brits will induce me to make my way to the altar of Hymen, my right hand will control the destiny of France and England *(for herself)* Oh, when the pure love of heaven leads me to the altar to put on Hymen's sweet veil, another heart steals my dear liberty! And while I see a fatal barrier growing between us, my soul cannot smile upon another love.

TALBOT Could the lamentations of Mary Stuart trouble Britain on this joyous day?

COURTIERS Mercy, mercy for Mary Stuart.

ELIZABETH I didn't think anything was going to disturb today's joyous festivities. Why do you make me lament over this guilty woman, over her sad fate?

CECIL Behead that woman who fomented discord even from prison with the flame of love.

COURTIERS Mercy!

ELIZABETH Silence! I cannot yet make up my mind. Oh, let a ray come down from heaven, to enlighten my mind. Then perhaps mercy will persuade my soul. But if that shameful woman steals all the hope from my heart, then the day of revenge will come.

COURTIERS May Elizabeth's beautiful heart be guided by the voice of mercy.

CECIL Remember, Elizabeth, that too much pity is dangerous.

ELIZABETH Oh, let a ray come down from heaven...

### III. Scene

ELIZABETH Why do I not see  
LEICESTER among you? Why does  
he alone stay away?  
CECIL He's here!

### 3<sup>rd</sup> SCENE

*(Leicester arrives,  
and kisses Elizabeth's hand.)*

ELIZABETH Count! I just asked  
about you.  
LEICESTER Oh, forgive me for my delay.  
What do you command?  
ELIZABETH *(takes off her ring  
and hands it to Leicester)*  
Here, give my ring to the French  
ambassador. Deliver the message  
that I accept his proposal of marriage.  
*(And there is no change in his face!)*  
*(to Leicester)* But I may still refuse  
the scepter he offers me, for I am  
still free.

*(You ungrateful man!)*

LEICESTER *(indifferently)*

I shall obey you!

ELIZABETH Farewell! *(She holds  
out her hand for him to kiss and  
departs, accompanied by the ladies-  
in-waiting, the lords, and Lord Cecil.  
Talbot wants to follow her, but  
Leicester grabs him by the arm  
and leads him away at the front  
of the stage so that they could  
talk in private.)*

### 4<sup>th</sup> SCENE

LEICESTER Oh, Talbot, did you ask  
about me at the tournament?  
TALBOT Yes!  
LEICESTER What do you want?  
TALBOT Every word I say will shock and  
delight you. I was... in Fotheringhay..  
LEICESTER What do I hear?!

TALBOT I saw unfortunate  
Mary Stuart!  
LEICESTER Talk more quietly  
among these walls! And how did  
she seem to you?  
TALBOT Like an angel of love, still just  
as beautiful and noble.  
LEICESTER Oh, she does not deserve  
this fate. And what did she tell you?  
Oh, speak!  
TALBOT First tell me, can I trust you?  
LEICESTER I swear; speak.

### IV. Scene

TALBOT *(hands him a letter and  
a portrait)* Mary Stuart sends you  
this portrait and letter. I accepted  
them from her hands, they were  
bathed in her tears.  
LEICESTER Oh, what a joy!  
TALBOT And the emotion she  
expressed when she said your name!  
LEICESTER Oh, what a joy! Ah, I see  
once more the beautiful face of the one  
I adore and dream of, It seems to me as  
radiant as the day when it first touched  
my heart. I seem to see on her face

a smile slowly appear, a beloved smile which once before decided my destiny.

TALBOT Her life is at risk and she seeks your aid.

LEICESTER Oh, the memories! Oh, this lovely portrait! I am ready to die for her!

TALBOT What will you do?

LEICESTER Set her free, or die with her!

TALBOT Does not the fate of her last supporters scare you?

LEICESTER For her sake I can face any fear or danger! I want to set her free, I want to set her free! For her faithful love, I shall dry her tears, and if sacrifice is necessary, I will bravely face my fate.

TALBOT Do not make her weep if she cannot escape the hour of death.

*(Talbot leaves. Leicester makes his way to the opposite door and meets the Queen there. A troubled look appears on his face.)*

## 5<sup>th</sup> SCENE

V. Scene and a duet

ELIZABETH You are distracted.

LEICESTER Me? No.  
(What an encounter!)

ELIZABETH Was Talbot talking to you?

LEICESTER That's true. (What's this?)

ELIZABETH I suspect him. That woman seduces them all. Perhaps, my Lord, you have received a message from Mary Stuart?

LEICESTER You are suspicious for nothing! Talbot is loyal to you.

ELIZABETH I know your heart. Tell me the truth, I demand it.

LEICESTER (Oh, heavens!) My Queen!

ELIZABETH Do you still conceal it from me? I understand. *(She wants to leave.)*

LEICESTER Oh, don't go away, hear me out! Oh, stop! Letter...

ELIZABETH Give me that letter.

LEICESTER (Miserable fate!)  
*(He kneels down and hands her the letter.)* Here, at the Queen's feet, I shall present it. Through me she asks the favour of a meeting with you.

ELIZABETH Rise, Count. You are doing too much for her. She thinks this will convince me. But she hopes in vain.  
*(She opens the letter, reads it quickly, and her fury turns into amazement.)*

What sentiment!

LEICESTER (She's touched!)

ELIZABETH She wants me to visit her in prison!

LEICESTER Yes, my Queen.

ELIZABETH Where is the force that made her desire three crowns?

LEICESTER Like lightning on a dark night it disappeared and got lost!

ELIZABETH On the wheel of fortune, even pride disappears.

LEICESTER Oh, mercy! My heart pleads for her.

ELIZABETH Your heart is hers, is that not so?

LEICESTER (Those words make me somber!)

ELIZABETH Everyone thinks so at the court...

LEICESTER And they're wrong.

ELIZABETH (Liar!)

LEICESTER I had nothing but  
compassion for her.

ELIZABETH (He loves her! Loves her!  
Oh, I am so mad! Mad!)

Is she charming? Tell me!

LEICESTER Yes!

ELIZABETH Yes? Yes? Yes?

LEICESTER Yes! She was  
the personification of love; at a young  
age, she looked like an angel, who  
would appear and inspire affection. Her  
soul was divine, her breath delicious;  
beautiful in her days of joy, beautiful in  
her days of suffering.

ELIZABETH I believe your words; she  
must be an angel to receive such praise.  
If in the hardship of prison she enchants  
every heart.

LEICESTER But... no... Queen!

ELIZABETH I know she entices every  
soul; she flatters every desire.

LEICESTER I think... I...

ELIZABETH (If you adore her, oh traitor,  
then fear my wrath.)

LEICESTER Beautiful in her days of joy,  
beautiful in her days of suffering. Come!

ELIZABETH (He dares to invite me.)

LEICESTER Grant my wish.

ELIZABETH Where? When?

LEICESTER This very day, your hunt will  
bring you to the forest near her prison.

ELIZABETH Count, you want me to?

LEICESTER I beg you.

ELIZABETH I understand.

(Impudent soul!) I will do it. (My rival

stretched her hand towards my brow to  
snatch my royal crown. In defeat she  
became more haughty and in her pride  
she tried to steal a beloved heart from  
me. Oh, she insults me too much, I must  
punish her.)

LEICESTER Come, my Queen, show  
your compassion, you shall see that  
the divine and beautiful innocence. You  
are kin, have pity on her, let the hatred in  
your soul dwell no longer.

ELIZABETH Silence! Where is  
the force? Where is the pride for  
the three crowns?

LEICESTER Restore her serenity and  
I'll be happy. Queen, come, restore her  
serenity and I'll be happy.

ELIZABETH (My rival stretched her hand  
towards my brow...)

LEICESTER Queen, I beg you. Restore  
her serenity and I'll be happy.

ELIZABETH (Oh, she insults me too  
much, I must punish her...)

*Park in Fotheringhay. On both sides,  
the trees are planted densely, with  
a wide view of the sea in the middle.*

*MARY runs out of the woods.*

*ANNA follows her slowly. The guards  
stand in view of the spectators.*

## 6<sup>th</sup> SCENE

VI. Scene and a cavatina

ANNA Slow, Queen.

MARY Don't you like it when I feel joy  
in my soul? Don't you see it? My prison

is the open sky. I adore it! Oh, the sweet pleasure that surrounds me!

ANNA Sorrow, only sorrow awaits you within these walls?

MARY Look: Beautiful and fragrant clusters of flowers appear in the meadows and they smile at me, yes, they smile at me, and the breezes flowing in from the beautiful shores of France whisper to me to rejoice as in my happy youth. Carry away my feeling, oh, little cloud that floats lightly through the air, carry away my sighs to the beautiful land that once nurished me. Oh, kindly descend and return me to France, relieve me of my grief! But the cruel cloud has fled to the land of happiness, that once nurished me.

*(A trumpet sounds in the distance.)*

What a sound!

HUNTERS *(behind the scenes)*

To the woods, to the hunt These voices!  
A stag appeared from the hill and then fled off to the riverbank. It seems to me like a royal hunt! Hurry and wound the stag.

MARY Oh, the voices!

ANNA It seems to me like a royal hunt!

MARY The sounds are getting closer...  
Horses...

HUNTERS The Queen!

MARY Oh! What a fatal name!

ANNA The tyrant is coming through the park.

MARY She wants to seed a new fear into the peace of my sad retreat. I have asked for her but I don't dare see her;

but I haven't the courage. Let her stay, let her remain on her throne, adored, let her ignore me; I am despised. No one feels pity for me.

ANNA She's near. Let's flee!

MARY My heart cannot be restrained.

ANNA Her heart cannot calm down!

MARY She wants to seed a new fear into the peace of my sad retreat...

## 7<sup>th</sup> SCENE

VII. Scene and a duet

*(Leicester comes.)*

MARY Ah, is my joy deception? Is that you, Leicester? Is it you?

LEICESTER He who adores you has come to break your chains.

MARY Will I finally be released from my prison? Freed? And yours forever? My troubled heart can hardly believe it.

LEICESTER Elizabeth is coming here; the hunt is a pretext to preserve her royal dignity. If you present yourself humbly...

MARY Humble to her?

LEICESTER Today you must.

MARY Oh, heavens! What do I hear? What do I hear! Spare me from this terrible prospect! *(She is about to leave.)*

LEICESTER If you love me, stay.

MARY And should I...?

LEICESTER You should hope.

MARY Forsaken by all, overwhelmed by sorrow, languid, despondent, with no hope in my heart. I was condemned to



tears and sighs for eternity. Only your affection can soothe my grief.

LEICESTER No, don't lose hope. She is magnanimous...

MARY So you think I should hope?

LEICESTER Your letter touched her heart...

MARY What are you saying?

LEICESTER I saw it in her eyes...

MARY Oh, heavens!

LEICESTER There was a tear in her eye.

MARY Oh!

LEICESTER If you listen to me and trust me, you will see, everything will change.

MARY Forsaken by all....

LEICESTER I saw it in her eyes...

MARY Of her heart I am convinced.

LEICESTER Mercy, mercy dwells in it often.

MARY Not for the one, who threatens her throne.

LEICESTER Are you saying no? Then alone, if she remains deaf to your supplications, I shall take revenge myself.

MARY What are you saying? What would you do? Risk yourself for me? Oh, but I don't want that.

LEICESTER Oh, yes, I will do it.

MARY I never feared a cruel death before, don't let me have to fear for your life. All I wanted, all I hoped for, was that you should be loyal and gentle; thanks to you, I hope my situation may be less miserable.

LEICESTER Yes, I pledge my loyalty and honour. My heart, which loves you, swears it. You will emerge from the misfortune that took all your glory. And if I don't offer you the kingdom or the hand of a prince, I will at least offer you my hand which opened your prison.

MARY Don't endanger yourself!

LEICESTER I swear, you will surpass this misfortune.

MARY Oh no!

LEICESTER Yes, loyalty.

MARY Oh, but I don't want that.

LEICESTER Honour... that's what I'll use...

MARY Oh, do not give me cause to fear for your life.

LEICESTER Yes, I pledge my loyalty and honour.

MARY All I wanted, all I hoped for, was that you should be loyal and gentle.

LEICESTER I will at least offer you my hand which opened your prison.

*(Maria leaves, Leicester rushes to meet Elizabeth, who has just arrived.)*

## 8<sup>th</sup> SCENE

VIII. Scene

ELIZABETH What place is this?

LEICESTER Fotheringhay.

ELIZABETH Oh, Count! Where have you brought me?

LEICESTER Have no worries. Mary will be brought to you by Talbot.

ELIZABETH What a sacrifice do I make for your sake! Can you see

it? Dismiss the hunters. This place is too crowded. (*The hunters move away at Leicester's signal and the courtiers gather in groups at the back of the stage.*)

CECIL (*to Elizabeth*) See, my Queen, how England adores you. Oh, you know that they call for her head.

ELIZABETH Silence!

LEICESTER (*to Elizabeth*) Oh, remember, that I brought you here to give comfort, to the painful life of a sister. The hand which gave her hardship, may restore her happiness.

ELIZABETH (I hate her! He does nothing but remind me of her.)

## 9<sup>th</sup> SCENE

TALBOT Come!

MARY Leave me. Take me back to my retreat.

ELIZABETH, LEICESTER,

CECIL, TALBOT Here she is.

MARY (*to Anne*) Oh, God!

## IX. Sextet

ELIZABETH She is still the same: proud, arrogant. Her arrogant soul fills me with fury. But she's silent. Rightly overwhelmed by terror.

MARY The face of the tyrant shows cruel condemnation, fierce, evil jealousy. A nagging fear nestled in my soul.

TALBOT If only that fatal wrath and blind fury were silent in the royal soul.

ANNA My soul is filled with tragic fear. Oh, what an ordeal is coming for that heart! Heavens! May she be an oppressed victim of eternal sorrow.

LEICESTER The poor thing has misery imprinted on her face, but the violent stars are not yet finished. I wish I could have spared her from so much pain.

CECIL I can already feel the burst of the suppressed revenge, my heart beating in anticipation of the prideful ordeal. May she be an oppressed victim of eternal sorrow.

## X. The dialogue of the two Queens

LEICESTER (*to Elizabeth*)

Please, greet her.

ELIZABETH (*to Leicester*)

I would rather forsake her.

TALBOT (*To Mary*) Don't hold back.

MARY (*to Talbot*) The abyss is near.

ELIZABETH (*to Leicester*) She is way too haughty.

LEICESTER (*to Elizabeth*) Humbled by cruel fate, she stands before you.

MARY (*shyly walks over and kneels in front of Elizabeth*) Dead to the world and to the throne, I kneel at your feet.

I ask only for your forgiveness. Don't be indifferent. Ah, sister, surely now you have insulted me enough! Oh, raise an unfortunate unto your heart.

CECIL (*to Elizabeth*) I swear to you, don't trust those deceptive lips.

MARY Oh, raise an unfortunate unto your heart.

ELIZABETH *(to Mary)* No, this place is suitable for you. In dust and shame.

MARY *(Give me strength.)*

*(to Elizabeth)* Who has turned you so cruel to me?

ELIZABETH Who? You yourself. Your soul, that proud, vile, wicked soul...

MARY *(Must I bear this?)*

ELIZABETH Go and ask, o wratched woman, your betrayed marriage bed and to the unavenged ghost of your unhappy husband. Ask your own actions, your evil heart, which amidst love's caresses was planning only crimes and betrayal.

MARY *(to Leicester)* Oh, Robert! I can bear no more.

LEICESTER *(to Mary)* Oh, God! What do you say?

CECIL *(to Elizabeth)* I swear to you, don't trust those deceptive lips.

LEICESTER *(to Mary)* Awaken your courage! You still have some hope. Let not the grace bestowed upon you cost you your honour, your life, and the favour which the Heavens denied to our feelings so many times.

ELIZABETH What words in my presence! Stand up, o Count.

LEICESTER And what should I say?

ELIZABETH Where is the magic of love and that loving face? When everyone was praising her, she rewarded their kindness. But an eternal shame has fallen on Mary Stuart's head.

MARY Oh, what am I hearing? I can bear no more. Oh, Robert! I cannot stand it anymore.

LEICESTER Oh God, restrain yourself!

MARY What an insult! Oh, you evil, mocking woman!

ELIZABETH *(to Mary)* What words! Tremble, tremble!

ANNA, LEICESTER, TALBOT *(to Mary)* What are you saying! Silent, be silent!

CECIL *(to Mary)* Tremble, tremble!

MARY No! Unchaste daughter of Boleyn, you speak of shame? Base, lascivious harlot, may my shame fall upon you. The throne of England is defiled by your presence, you wretched bastard!

ELIZABETH *(Elizabeth calls the soldiers)* Guards! *(Cecil leaves for a moment, then returns, accompanied by the guards who bring Mary in.)* *(The soldiers arrive.)*

ANNA, LEICESTER, TALBOT What words! She's delirious! Righteous Heaven! She's lost!

CECIL, COURTIERS What words! She is raving! Righteous Heaven! She's lost! There is no more hope for her!

XI. Final strettta

ELIZABETH *(to Mary)* Go, prepare yourself, mad woman, to suffer the worst fate. On your despised head I will pour disgrace. *(to the guards)* Take away the raging one who has condemned herself!

CECIL The heavens proclaim vengeance on the insolent woman!

MARY Thank you, oh Heavens! I'm finally breathing freely. Such words! Reckless woman! When I return to you fate shatters our hope! She's humbled at my feet, her light darkened!

ANNA, TALBOT Such words! Reckless woman!

LEICESTER When I return to you fate shatters our hope!

COURTIERS The greatest queen has condemned you to execution for insulting her. Yes, silence, tremble, all hope is lost.

TALBOT *(to Leicester)* Leicester, come on, don't let Elizabeth hear you.

MARIA, LEICESTER Farewell! Forever!

ANNA Oh, silence!

ELIZABETH *(to the guards)* Take her away! *(The guards bring Mary in.)* You will meet my revenge by the executioner's axe. *(to the guards)*

Take away the raging one who has condemned herself.

MARY *(Comes accompanied by guards, repeats with increasing enthusiasm)* Now take me to my death.

I will face the worst fate. A single moment of triumph has made up for all my misery.

LEICESTER When I return to you fate shatters our hope!

ANNA, TALBOT What suffering you cause to those who want to save you.

COURTIERS To execution for insulting the greatest...

CECIL The heavens proclaim vengeance on the insolent woman!

## ACT II

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### 1<sup>st</sup> SCENE

*The Hall of the Westminster Palace. The Queen sits at her desk with a letter on it, Cecil stands next to her.*

XII. Duetino

CECIL Are you still considering it? Are you hesitating? While the one who insulted you is still alive? She who has rallied all of Europe against you and threatened your sacred life?

ELIZABETH At your words I feel all the strength of my trampled honour search in my heart. But, oh, God! Who will exonerate me from unjust accusations?

CECIL Heavens, devoted Albion, and all the world, where the glory of your deeds is as well known as the audacity of Mary Stuart and her crimes, her insults aimed against you...

ELIZABETH Silence! I am mortified. How that arrogant woman enjoyed her triumph! How she looked at me! Oh, my faithful Cecil, I want peace and she has stolen it from me.

CECIL And she won't stop troubling you as long as she's alive.

ELIZABETH I have decided. She should die. *(She takes a quill to sign the letter. Then she pauses and stands up.)* I would like to end that hostile life

which is so harmful to me, oh yes, that I would love. But the heart stops my hand, a veil covers my thoughts. I seem to see the godless woman, to hear her, terrifying me, frightening me, and threatening to steal the hope of peace. O righteous Heavens! You lead a soul which doubts so much so easily.

CECIL Oh, why is your mind so suddenly agitated? Do not fear that you honour will be disgraced. For the unpunished insults every Englishman would like to avenge you. For the words she has said, sign the letter, your peers shall surely forgive you.

## 2<sup>nd</sup> SCENE

### XIII. Tercet

ELIZABETH Yes! (*Elizabeth is uncertain. When she sees Leicester coming, she signs the letter quickly and hands it to Cecil.*)

LEICESTER My Queen!

ELIZABETH Hasten her execution.

LEICESTER Oh, heavens, what words! (*when he sees the letter*) I guess that...

CECIL The verdict.

LEICESTER The verdict?

ELIZABETH Yes, the verdict, oh traitor. I am satisfied!

LEICESTER You condemn innocence?

ELIZABETH Are you still talking?

LEICESTER For pity's sake, stay your hand, yield to my prayers. Don't listen to that villain, now that you are safe or

let the blow fall on me. Nobody can force you; you have free will.

CECIL (*quietly to Elizabeth*)

Don't listen to that villain, now that you are safe.

ELIZABETH Your supplication is useless, I can resist such advice.

LEICESTER Oh, mercy!

ELIZABETH The end of that prideful woman also means the end of danger for me.

LEICESTER My Queen!

ELIZABETH The shedding of her blood revives my power.

LEICESTER Nobody can force you...

CECIL You needn't worry about the one who had inflamed your kingdom. Her last day of life will be your first day of peace.

LEICESTER Oh, you're cruel, you have ordered a sister's death.

ELIZABETH And you will be a witness to her ultimate fate. Your lover shall die at the fatal moment when the cannon has sounded three times.

LEICESTER And you want me to see that?

ELIZABETH Be Silent!

LEICESTER Do you want me to?

ELIZABETH Be Silent! All compassion is dead.

LEICESTER My Queen!

ELIZABETH Leave, scum. Your face shows the terror which has struck your heart. Prepare a tomb for your affections when Mary Stuart is dead.

LEICESTER I am leaving, I can see on your face that you are delirious, you are flushed with anger. Mary will find in me comfort, a friend, and support in my heart.

CECIL O my Queen, brighten your face, return to peace and to glory; this, o this shall be the most glorious day for your throne and for England.

ELIZABETH Leave, scum. Prepare a tomb for your affections...

### 3<sup>rd</sup> SCENE

*A room in Mary Stuart's prison at Fotheringhay Castle.*

XIV. Scene

MARY That dishonest woman wanted to disgrace me, but the disgrace fell back on her. How despicable! Am I not a daughter of the Tudors? But Robert... Maybe he faces the anger of that tyrant. I alone am the cause of everyone's misfortune! *(Cecil comes in with the verdict and Talbot.)*

### 4<sup>th</sup> SCENE

MARY What do you want?

CECIL I come to deliver sad news. I carry a decree that orders your last days.

MARY Is this how a queen is judged in England? Villains! And the false evidence...

CECIL The kingdom...

MARY No more!

CECIL But...

MARY Enough already. Get out! Talbot, remain.

CECIL Do you wish a minister to accompany you on the way to death?

MARY I refuse him. I will be as I was, a stranger to your religion.

CECIL *(on his way out)*  
(Still proud and haughty!)

### 5<sup>th</sup> SCENE

XV. The grand scene and the duet confession.

MARY Oh, my good Talbot!

TALBOT I asked Elizabeth for the favour to see you before the bloody hour.

MARY Yes, relieve my soul from the loneliness of death.

TALBOT And yet you took the mournful announcement firmly.

MARY Oh, Talbot! Didn't you see the fear in my face? My heart trembled. And Leicester?

TALBOT He must witness your fate. The Queen has ordered it.

MARY Oh, that unfortunate man! He will be subjected to a painful punishment! And the tyrant will rejoice. Nor does the avenging thunder yet strike.

TALBOT Do not say that!

MARY Driven from Scotland, from my throne, from my religion, I hoped

with her to find a peaceful refuge, and instead I found a prison here.

TALBOT What are you saying?

Hasn't God provided you comfort in your distress?

MARY No, Talbot, never. The sorrowful phantom of my transgressions

intervenes the Heavens and continues to deprive the dead of sleep, and calls

forth the bloody shade of my husband Henry from the grave. Talbot, can you

see him too? Behold young courtier Riccio and his pale corpse?

TALBOT (*He unbuttons his robe to reveal his priestly vestments; he pulls out a crucifix.*) Oh, take comfort. You are

nearing immortal life. When you go to the block, your heart shall be free from

all earthly cares.

MARY Yes, to cleanse my transgressions, my tears mingled with

blood shall flow; listen, I want to lay them upon your faithful heart.

TALBOT Tell me.

MARY At last I have found a friend in you. In the rosy days of my youth, when

sweet pictures made my soul happy, love brought guilt upon me, and revealed

the abyss of sin. Sweetly smiling,

I hated my husband. Henry! Henry!

Miserable man, put to death because of me, but his mournful voice makes my

heart sink! Beloved shade, be appeased,

I feel death inside my heart. May my

tears appease you, may my suffering be enough.

TALBOT God forgives every soul.

I implore God to forgive you.

MARY Forgive my long suffering and pray to Heaven for me.

TALBOT You still have another sin to mourn.

MARY What sin?

TALBOT Were you in league with traitorous plotters?

MARY Be silent. It was a fatal error!

TALBOT Remember that almighty God punishes transgressors, that

a deceiving heart cannot hide from his all-seeing eyes.

MARY No! My thoughts could never be concealed from Heaven. Alas, a dark veil

has hidden the truth until now. My heart will swear it in death and ask God for

mercy. I swear to God!

TALBOT (*The Lord's forgiveness is already descending on your head.*)

May the hidden truth blaze forth from your blood.

MARY Yes... yes.

TALBOT Leave peacefully this troubled life as an angel you will go to God

the comforter. Transfigured by pure joy your soul will forget the sorrows which

have tormented you.

MARY Now that the ray of my simple life is dying out, Heaven alone can give

peace to my troubled heart. If my soul has been sustained by too many tears

may I pour out my lasting grief in my final suffering.

TALBOT Are you innocent, then?

MARY I am going to my death.

TALBOT Unfortunate! You die innocent.

MARY Yes, I am innocent,  
I swear it, I shall die.

TALBOT Leave peacefully this  
troubled life...

MARY Now that the ray of my simple  
life is dying out...

*(Maria leans on Talbot and they go  
inside the castle. She keeps pointing  
to the cross.)*

## 6<sup>th</sup> SCENE

*The hall adjacent to the place of  
execution. Large closed door in  
the back. It's night time.*

### XVI. Hymn of Death

MARY'S RELATIVES *(some)* Have you  
seen? *(others)* We saw it. *(everyone)*  
Oh, the cruel instruments! The block...  
The axe... Mourning place... and people  
shivering at the steps of the fatal  
scaffold. What a sight! What a horror!  
The crowd awaits the sacrifice.  
The royal victim. Oh, the uncertain  
destiny! But the Queen's cruel death will  
forever be a disgrace and dishonour to  
England. *(Anna arrives.)*

## 7<sup>th</sup> SCENE

### XVII. Grand scene and a prayer

RELATIVES Anna!

ANNA Keep your voice down.

RELATIVES Where is the poor woman?

ANNA Sad, full of sorrow, she  
approaches. Oh, do not increase her  
pain with your grief.

RELATIVES We will remain silent.  
*(Mary comes in black, very splendidly  
dressed, adorned with a crown,  
and Talbot.)*

## 8<sup>th</sup> SCENE

MARY *(to the relatives)*

At last I see you again.

ANNA, RELATIVES We're losing you!

MARY I will enjoy a better life.

RELATIVES Oh!

MARY A better life, yes, I will cherish it.  
I am flying happily into the arms of God,  
but you, leave this land of suffering.

RELATIVES The pain is breaking  
our hearts!

MARY Do not weep! Anna, you alone  
remain. You, who are dearest to me, take  
this linen soaked with my tears; it will  
be a cover for my eyes when they are  
forever closed to the light of day. But  
are you still crying? Come join me, my  
faithful ones, and let's offer one last  
pious and fervent prayer to merciful  
Heaven. God! Hear my humble prayer,  
o benevolent God, merciful God. Accept  
me into the light of your forgiveness, my  
heart has no other refuge.

ANNA, RELATIVES. God! Hear our  
humble prayer, o benevolent God,  
merciful God. Accept her into the light



of your forgiveness, her heart has no other refuge.

MARY Oh yes... God! Receive me underneath the wings of your forgiveness, there is no other refuge for my heart. Your tears are needless, the Heavens will help me.

ANNA, RELATIVES Accept her into the light of your forgiveness, her heart has no other refuge.

MARY Weeping is useless, the Heavens will help me.

ANNA, RELATIVES Forget the carelessness of your life.

MARY Oh!

ANNA, RELATIVES Freed from pain, freed from suffering, the merciful Heaven has forgiven you.

MARY Free from pain, free from suffering, I will enjoy eternal love.

ANNA, RELATIVES Spread the veil over your past sorrows, benevolent Heaven has forgiven you.

MARY God! Oh yes! I will enjoy eternal love. I'm forgiven.

ANNA, RELATIVES Oh, God! Mercy! Oh, grace! Benevolent Heaven has forgiven you. *(The first cannon shot sounds from the castle.)*

XVIII. The Execution Aria

RELATIVES Oh, the first shot!

## 9<sup>th</sup> SCENE

*(The back door opens to reveal a large staircase, at the top of which the guards and court officials stand with torches. Cecil comes down the stairs.)*

CECIL The moment of your death is approaching. Elizabeth grants your last wish. Speak.

MARY I did not expect such pity from her. Let Anna attend me to the scaffold.

CECIL She'll come.

MARY If you accepted my first request, listen to the next one. From a dying heart take forgiveness to the one who condemned me. Tell her that she may rest easy on her throne, that I will not trouble her beautiful days. I shall implore the blessings of Heaven on Britain and her life. Let her not be troubled with remorse; all shall be washed away by my blood. From a dying heart take forgiveness to the one who condemned me. Tell her that she may rest easy on her throne, that I will not trouble her beautiful days.

ANNA, TALBOT, RELATIVES The axe will end a life which filled us with joy.

CECIL Her audacity has been punished; We shall see peace return among us.

LAST SCENE

*(Leicester and the predecessors, then sheriff and the court officials.)*

TALBOT The Count is coming.

MARY Oh, he comes to  
a sombering scene.

LEICESTER *(to Mary)* I see you once  
more. Forlorn, humiliated by unjust  
punishment, close to death...

MARY Restrain your grief!  
Farewell for ever!

CECIL The hour approaches.

LEICESTER Oh, I can't leave  
you just yet.

CECIL The hour approaches.

LEICESTER *(to Cecil, who wants to  
tear him away from Mary)*

Stand aside, coward!

MARY Be silent!

LEICESTER Tremble! You are all evil!  
Fear God, the avenger of the innocent!

MARY You will destroy yourself!

LEICESTER Fear God, the avenger  
of the innocent! *(The second shot  
from the cannon. The sheriff and his  
entourage of court officials come down  
the stairs, escorting Mary.)*

RELATIVES Oh, why can't I quench your  
blind rage with my blood!

CECIL It's time!

LEICESTER *(to Cecil)* Coward!

MARIA *(to Leicester)* Robert!

Robert! Listen to me! *(leaning on  
Leicester's arm)* Where once you would  
free me from my prison now may you

lead me to my death by the strength  
of your love. And let my innocent blood  
appease the anger of the heaven, let it  
not call down upon England the scourge  
of a punishing God.

LEICESTER, TALBOT,

ANNA, RELATIVES Such words!

Such cruel misfortune!

CECIL Now peace is secure  
in England, yes!

MARIA Anna, farewell! Robert, farewell!

Where once you would free me from  
my prison... *(The third shot from  
the cannon. The executioner appears  
on the scene with an axe and four of his  
black-clad assistants.)*

CECIL Now peace is secure  
in England, the enemy of the kingdom  
goes to her death.

TALBOT, ANNA,

LEICESTER, RELATIVES Innocent,  
dishonored, she dies.

*(Mary leans on Talbot, surrounded by  
her guards. She goes to the end of  
the scene. Leicester covers his face  
with his hands.)*

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