

# Chastelard

Chastelard: A Tragedy by Algernon Charles Swinburne is a poetic drama of unrequited love and tragic obsession between the poet Chastelard and Mary, Queen of Scots.

## SCENE I.--The Upper Chamber in Holyrood.

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In Act I of "Chastelard, a tragedy," the scene unfolds in the Upper Chamber in Holyrood with Mary Beaton, Mary Hamilton, Mary Carmichael, and Mary Seyton—collectively known as the four Maries. The act opens with Mary Beaton singing a melancholy French song that captures the essence of her longing and sadness, weaving the sea's vastness and tumult with personal emotion. Her companions inquire why her singing always seems to sadden her, leading to a discussion that reveals Mary Beaton's melancholy is partly due to her lack of lovers since leaving France, touching upon past romances and the bittersweet memories of love.

The conversation among the Maries shifts towards courtly gossip and speculation about the affections and intentions within their circle, especially those directed towards the queen. They observe and comment on the various men bustling about the court, including the queen's suitors, with a particular focus on Master Knox and his influence over the people. This leads to a broader discussion on love, loyalty, and flirtation, highlighted by Mary Hamilton's recollection of a game played in the Louvre garden, which serves as a metaphor for the unpredictability and sometimes unrequited nature of love.

As they continue, Mary Beaton eventually resumes her song, introducing more verses that mournfully intertwine love and sea imagery, revealing her deep emotional turmoil.

Her performance prompts speculation about her feelings for Chastelard, a theme that recurs throughout the act. The dynamic among the Maries further exposes the complex web of relationships, jealousy, and intrigue that characterizes the royal court. Their dialogue weaves a vivid picture of courtly life, highlighting the complexities of love, the roles women play within it, and the underlying tensions of their existence within Holyrood.

The act intricately portrays the nuanced relationships and political dynamics within the Scottish court through the lens of the four Maries. Their interactions, filled with veiled references to love, loyalty, and rivalry, set the stage for the unfolding tragedy. The entrance of Darnley towards the end of the act brings these tensions to the forefront, illustrating the personal and political complexities surrounding the queen's courtiers and their intertwined fates.

## SCENE II. -A Hall in the same.

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In a vivid hall filled with characters like Queen Mary, Darnley, Murray, Randolph, the two Maries, and Chastelard, a scene unfolds that captures the intricate dance of courtly love and political intrigue within the Scottish court. The Queen, initially disinterested in dancing, is presented with a breast-clasp, a gift from the French king, depicting a Venus that allegorically embodies the destructive nature of love. This piece, meticulously crafted by Gian Grisostomo, becomes a focal point of conversation between her and Chastelard, highlighting the Queen's penchant for the fine details and symbolism in art, reflecting the nuances of her own rule and relationships.

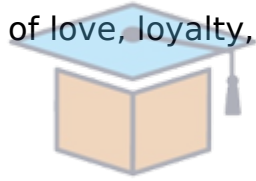
Chastelard and the Queen then engage in a dance, a ritual that seems to stir discontent and jealousy among the courtiers, particularly Darnley, who finds the exclusivity of the dancing pairs unsettling. The dialogue captures the underlying tensions and rivalries that permeate the court, where love and loyalty are as fluctuating as the Scottish weather. MURRAY and MARY HAMILTON discuss the Queen's demeanor, suggesting a discrepancy between her public facade and her private sentiments.

The Queen's expression of growing weariness and feeling out of place in her northern realm conveys a profound sense of isolation and longing for her native France, a land she remembers as alive with warmth and color, starkly contrasting with the cold, mist-laden landscapes of Scotland. Chastelard's poetry introduces a tender moment of shared artistic appreciation and personal connection, highlighting the Queen's emotional and cultural estrangement.

As the scene progresses, the courtly festivities shift to a more introspective mode, with the Queen expressing nostalgia and a cryptic dissatisfaction with her life in Scotland. Her interaction with Chastelard, especially the public kiss, acts as a catalyst for further

speculation and gossip among the courtiers, accentuating the precariousness of her position, both as a ruler and a woman. DARNLEY's insights into the Queen's behavior, comparing her unfavorably with an undefined "grave English maid," underscore the ongoing tension between personal inclinations and political expediency.

Swinburne's narrative weaves through themes of love, power, and identity, using the dialogue and interactions among the characters to expose the complexities of court life, where every gesture and word carries weight, and where the Queen navigates the treacherous waters of love, loyalty, and control, all under the watchful eyes of her court.



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## SCENE III.--MARY BEATON'S chamber: night.

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In the dimly lit chamber of Mary Beaton, Chastelard waits, unsure if she will come, yet hopeful. He reflects on the last encounter with her, the subtleties of her gestures, and the lingering warmth of her hand, which fuels his anticipation. Even though he faces death, Chastelard finds solace in the end of his two-year wait, regardless of the outcome.



His musings are interrupted when Mary Beaton enters. Their exchange is fraught with emotion and misunderstanding. Chastelard, mistaking Mary for another in the dim light, expresses his desire for her with passionate intensity, believing he recognizes her by her touch and presence alone. When Mary Beaton speaks, it's with a plea for death, believing herself shamed beyond redemption. She begs Chastelard to kill her, to spare her the torment of living with her embarrassment.

Chastelard is shaken by her request but refuses to harm her, instead offering consolation and imploring her not to view herself through the lens of shame. He assures her of his unwavering respect and offers his lifelong service, a testament to the depth of his feelings. Mary Beaton, however, is consumed by her disgrace, fearing ridicule and scorn from others, even as Chastelard tries to convince her of his genuine regard.

Their intimate, yet tumultuous interaction is cut short by the arrival of others, prompted by Mary Beaton's urgent plea for Chastelard to hide. The sudden intrusion of Mary Seyton and Mary Hamilton brings a momentary panic, fearing they've been caught. Chastelard, however, remains calm, questioning the late-night disturbance as the chapter draws to a close, leaving readers with a sense of impending confrontation and uncertainty about Chastelard and Mary Beaton's fate.

This chapter vividly portrays the complex interplay of love, honor, and disgrace through its characters' charged dialogue, set against the backdrop of a secretive night-time meeting that threatens to unravel in the presence of outside intrusion.



## SCENE I.--The great Chamber in Holyrood.

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In Act II, Scene I of Algernon Charles Swinburne's *Chastelard, a Tragedy*, the setting unfolds in the Great Chamber in Holyrood, encapsulating a tense and intimate dialogue between Queen Mary and Mary Seyton. The scene initiates with the Queen pressing Mary Seyton for a confirmation of an observed indiscretion, which subtly unveils the precarious balance of trust and scandal within the court. Further, the interaction reveals the Queen's disconcerted state over her reputation and her associates, particularly towards Chastelard, highlighting her conflicted emotions between duty, friendship, and her perception of love.

As the scene progresses, the Queen's interaction with Father Black introduces a stark contrast between the spiritual guidance expected from the clergy and the tangible, often scandalous, concerns of the court. Father Black's tale of public scorn and personal indignity underscores the societal judgment the Queen faces, further complicating her position amid rumors and expectations.

Enter Chastelard, whose conversation with the Queen shifts the tone to one of nostalgia, romance, and a candid exploration of desires and fears. Their dialogue meanders through dreams, reminiscences of past events, and speculative futures, where the Queen reflects openly on her envy of the freedoms typically afforded to men, particularly in matters of love and war. Through their interaction, Swinburne explores themes of gender, power, and the constraints imposed by societal roles and expectations.

The Queen's declarations and reflections, woven between personal ambitions and vulnerabilities, reflect her internal struggle with her identity, role, and aspirations as a monarch and a woman. This culminates in her overt acceptance of Darnley, marked by a public declaration of love and partnership, positioning herself and Darnley within the

anticipative gaze of court and country alike, steering the narrative towards a resolution that is both a personal and political union.

The chapter closes with a transformative decision by the Queen, signifying a pivotal moment of change in her reign and personal life. Swinburne crafts a complex interplay of betrayal, ambition, and the quest for personal fulfilment against the backdrop of the claustrophobic and manipulative court environment, laying the groundwork for the unfolding tragedy.



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## ACT III. -chastelard

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Act III of Algernon Charles Swinburne's tragedy "Chastelard" unfolds in the Queen's chamber, where the atmosphere is tense and charged with forbidden love and the anticipation of tragedy. Chastelard has surreptitiously entered the Queen's private space, signifying his willingness to risk everything for a moment with her. Mary Beaton, aware of the danger, attempts to dissuade him, highlighting the fatal consequences of his actions. Yet, Chastelard, driven by an overwhelming passion, likens his love to a fatal enchantment, comparing himself to sailors bewitched by sea witches, indicating his readiness to face death for his love.

As the scene progresses, Chastelard hides as Queen Mary and Darnley enter. The tension rises when Darnley leaves and Chastelard reveals himself, confessing his undying love and his acceptance of the inevitable death his love will bring. Their conversation is a dance of passion and despair, with the Queen struggling between her duties and her feelings for Chastelard. She acknowledges her love for him, yet the reality of his impending execution for treason hangs heavily between them.

The tragedy's heart lies in the dialogue between Chastelard and the Queen, where they explore the depths of love that condemns and redeems, the sweet anticipation of death for love's sake, and the bitter acceptance of love's impossibility. Chastelard's reflections on his fate and his declarations of love are poetic and poignant, revealing his complex character as both a lover and a doomed man. The Queen, equally complex, is torn between her royal responsibilities and her personal desires.

Their final moments together are interrupted by Darnley's return, leading to Chastelard's arrest. Despite the Queen's protests, the inevitability of Chastelard's execution is clear. The act ends with Chastelard's surrender to the guards, his farewell to the Queen, and Darnley's demand for Chastelard's execution, underscoring the

destructive power of love and the tragic fate that awaits those who dare to defy societal norms for it.

This act beautifully combines elements of forbidden love, tragedy, and the fatal consequences of passions pursued against the backdrop of royal intrigue. It captures the essence of a tragedy where love does not triumph but instead leads to inevitable ruin and despair.



## SCENE I.-The Queen's Lodging at St. Andrew's.

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In Act IV of Algernon Charles Swinburne's tragedy "Chastelard," the Queen, surrounded by her entourage at St. Andrew's, contends with the implications of mercy, justice, and reputation as she grapples with the decision of Chastelard's fate. Swinburne crafts a complex psychological and emotional landscape in which the Queen, pressured by her advisors and her own conscience, navigates the treacherous waters of royal authority and personal affection.

The act opens with the Queen in dialogue with her ladies-in-waiting, expressing her torment over the impending execution of Chastelard and her frustration with her inability to show clemency without endangering her own position and the stability of the realm. The Queen's inner conflict is palpable as she asserts her wish to pardon Chastelard, despite acknowledging the risks to her reputation and authority. Her conversation with Mary Hamilton reveals the Queen's doubts about her own judgment and the harshness with which she feels obliged to rule.

As the discussions unfold, the Queen's vacillation between mercy and the maintenance of her royal dignity becomes apparent. She resents the constraints imposed by her role, which force her into decisions that conflict with her personal desires. The emphasis on dialogue and inner turmoil in this act highlights Swinburne's focus on the emotional complexities of leadership and the painful sacrifices demanded by power.

In an emotionally charged exchange with Murray, her brother, the Queen reveals the depth of her dilemma. She seeks a resolution that would spare Chastelard yet preserve her honor, but Murray's reluctance and the weight of political expediency darken her hopes. The Queen's interactions with Darnley further complicate matters, as her attempts to manipulate the situation reveal the limitations of her influence and the personal cost of her royal duties.

The act concludes with the Queen's increasingly desperate efforts to save Chastelard without compromising her royal standing. The portrayal of her solitude and alienation amid the court's political machinations underscores the isolation inherent in her position. Swinburne's depiction of the Queen's struggle offers a poignant exploration of the burdens of leadership, the cruelty of political necessity, and the tragic consequences of love entangled with power.



## SCENE I.-Before Holyrood.

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Before Holyrood, a buzzing crowd waits with anticipation. Among them—soldiers, burgesses, and a preacher—engage in speculative chatter about the fate awaiting Chastelard. Questions and judgments are freely exchanged, reflecting the public's curiosity and outrage toward a man accused of entangling the queen in scandalous intimacy.



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One citizen questions whether Chastelard will face the gallows with the same tearful sorrow observed in a recent execution, suggesting a disdain for those who entertain through arts but meet their end in disgrace. Another adds fuel to the fire, hinting at Chastelard's rumored affections with the queen, depicted as brazen and unseemly for their public displays.

As the crowd's conversation deepens, a shared distaste for what they perceive as Chastelard's moral corruption emerges. They scorn his poetry, which they believe to be laced with illicit desires, and criticize the queen's participation in creating such 'music' that they deem suitable only for the damned.

Discussion turns towards the potential company of Priest Black at the execution, revealing a broader contempt for religious figures tainted by association with scandal. The citizens express a visceral dislike for hypocrisy within the church, suggesting a desire for eventual divine retribution.

Amidst the collective vilification, a voice of curiosity arises—a woman in the crowd questions the nature of Chastelard's allure that could captivate a queen. Her inquiry signals a slight shift away from outright condemnation, hinting at the complexity of Chastelard's character and his relationship with the queen.

This snapshot before Holyrood captures a moment of public judgment and spectacle, where the community eagerly awaits the downfall of a man caught in a web of love,

poetry, and politics. Their conversations reflect the societal norms and expectations surrounding morality, power, and the arts, serving as a prelude to the tragic end that awaits Chastelard.



## SCENE II.-In Prison.

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In this fragment from Algernon Charles Swinburne's tragedy "Chastelard," we delve into a complex web of emotion, betrayal, and impending doom, centered around the main character, Chastelard, a prisoner awaiting execution, Mary Beaton, who brings him hope of reprieve, and the Queen, embodying a fatal mixture of power and vulnerability.



The drama unfolds in a prison where Chastelard grapples with his imminent death, reminiscing about a life fueled by passionate but destructive love. His reflections are abruptly interrupted by Mary Beaton, who presents a reprieve, a fleeting hope swiftly dampened by Chastelard's profound resignation to his fate. Torn by his feelings and sense of honor, he destroys the reprieve, sealing his destiny and rejecting a life devoid of the love that defines him.

As the tragic narrative progresses, the Queen enters, a complex figure torn between duty, desire, and remorse. Her dialogue with Chastelard is a dance of love, manipulation, and mutual longing for what cannot be. Despite granting a reprieve, the Queen is caught in a whirlwind of political and emotional turmoil, unable to secure Chastelard's safety or fulfill her own desires.

This segment encapsulates the tragedy's essence – the exploration of love's destructive power, honor's weight, and the inevitable march towards a tragic end. Chastelard's steadfast acceptance of death, the Queen's conflicted soul, and Mary Beaton's helpless love weave a tapestry of inevitable tragedy, highlighting the complexities of human emotion and the harsh realities of the socio-political machinations of their time.

As the drama reaches its climax, Chastelard and the Queen confront their fates, entwined in a final embrace of love and despair. The Queen, symbolizing both the

object of Chastelard's affection and the force behind his undoing, is left to ponder the cruel ironies of fate, love, and power. Through eloquent dialogue and poignant scenes, Swinburne masterfully captures the essence of tragedy, leaving a lasting impression of the characters' inescapable destiny shaped by the forces of love, betrayal, and societal expectations.





## SCENE III.--The Upper Chamber in Holyrood.

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In this chapter of Algernon Charles Swinburne's *Chastelard, a Tragedy*, Queen Mary exhibits a complex interplay of mercy, defiance, and a haunting prelude to an inevitable tragedy. She begins by ensuring Chastelard's pardon with passionate resolve, attempting to circumvent his fate by indicating her willingness to confront his executioners and, if necessary, share in his sentence. The Queen dispatches Mary Beaton and Carmichael to observe the unfolding events discreetly from Holyrood, instructing them to act unaware of her plans, thus weaving a narrative of suspense and implicit trust in her capacity for clemency.

Mary Beaton and Mary Carmichael, stationed in Holyrood, offer contrasting views on the situation below. Carmichael notes the assemblage's mundane activities, while Beaton, consumed by an emotional tumult, predicts the crowd's eventual outcry against the Queen. Despite Carmichael's consolations, Beaton's premonitions darken with a visceral hatred for the Queen, whom she accuses of a murderous disposition masked by beauty. The sighting of significant figures, such as Murray and Darnley, among the crowd, adds layers of political intrigue and personal vendettas, hinting at the complex socio-political fabric that Chastelard's execution is set against.

The climax burgeons as Chastelard is brought forth, met with a mixture of anticipation, horror, and final resignations from the spectators above. Beaton's internal struggle, oscillating between prayer and despair, portrays a profound human conflict in the face of mortality and betrayal. Carmichael's description of Chastelard's demeanor—as one unburdened by his fate, engaging with the crowd, and ultimately facing his execution with a perplexing cheer—highlights a dissonant courage rooted in either conviction or resignation.

The execution scene, as witnessed by the two Maries, juxtaposes the public spectacle of death with a private moment of anguish and acceptance. As the axe falls, sealing

Chastelard's fate, Queen Mary's reactions, entwined with Beaton's grief, encapsulate a poignant reflection on the intricacies of power, love, and retribution. Beaton's insistence on visually confronting death, driven by a profound connection to the living Chastelard, underscores the narrative's exploration of human emotional depth amidst the stark finality of justice and the cruelty of political machinations. In conclusion, this chapter weaves a complex tapestry of emotion, political intrigue, and the inevitable tragic end, all under the looming shadow of Queen Mary's fraught leadership and the doomed love affair with Chastelard.



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