REIGN PILOT

TEASER

FADE IN:

EXT. MEDIEVAL CONVENT - DAY

A nunnery tucked in a clearing, forest all around. A chapel, a main hall, living quarters, outbuildings complete with livestock. Crops. These nuns are self-sustaining.

CHYRON - CONVENT ST. MICHEL - FRANCE, 1557

EXT. MEDIEVAL CONVENT - PLAYING FIELD - DAY

A tangle of lean legs scissor through frame, fighting over a hand-stitched muddy soccer ball. TEENAGE GIRLS (students) in drab uniforms, and YOUNG NUNS (in habits) on both teams. Skirts hiked, tied at the waist for ease of movement.

A small crowd of students and nuns are also on the side-lines, cheering or waiting to get in the game. Among them, a young girl, ROSE, 9, roots with fervor for a single player:

ROSE
Go Mary, go! Get ready, take it --

ON MARY, 15, a fresh-faced Scottish beauty and a natural athlete, racing to receive a pass, when a plain-faced nun (SR. AGNES, 20's), SLAMS into her. Mary reels, in pain, as the ball sails past. A girl, a newer student, checks in.

TEAMMATE
She did that on purpose.
Why does she hate you so?

Mary clocks both the offending nun and the ball in play.

MARY
I've no idea, but I'm used to it.
(encouraging)
Don't worry, most everyone else on the team are really good sports.

Mary sees a break and races for the ball. Wedging between other players, aggressively taking control. CRIES of "*MARY! MARY! MARY!*" as she takes the ball down the field, passing to another girl for a GOAL.

Girls, nuns, Mary and her teammates roughly embrace -- Mary is well liked, easily approached, a total team player.

INT. CONVENT HALL - DAY

Mealtime. Long, rough hewn tables. Mary is cleaned up but in a drab uniform, sitting in a sea of girls. Nuns at the far end, being served first, as Sr. Agnes joins them; begins eating as the servers make their way toward Mary's end. Conversation BUZZING all around.

ON MARY, trying to engage in the chatter, but feeling Sr. Agnes's glare. Mary tries to ignore it, looking to her friends; catches the nun's look again. Eyes fixed on Mary with an actual GRIMACE. Fed up, Mary makes a choice -- stares her right back down, *knock it off, bitch,* when Sr. Agnes leans forward slightly. The nun stares in shock as --

BLOOD trickles from the nun's nose, collecting in her palm. Another stream from her ear... SHOUTS penetrate the din as people react, blood coming now from every orifice, streaming down her face. It's awful --

-- but the OLDER NUNS, those in charge, run to Mary.

ON MARY - terrified by the bloodied Sr. Agnes. Shocked when the nuns yank Mary away from the table, sending Mary's untouched meal CRASHING out of reach. Pulling Mary out of the room protectively as she stares at Sr. Agnes who crumples to the floor, victim of a horrific death by poison.

HEAR - the rising SOUND OF POUNDING HOOVES --

EXT. WOODS - DAY

Dozens of horses pummel the ground. Mounted by a SMALL ARMY of Kingsmen, guards. Racing to the convent. To Mary.

INT. CONVENT - CORRIDOR - DAY

TIGHT ON MARY - hurrying down a corridor. Now flanked by formally dressed guards, rushed along for her safety.

MARY
I don't understand, what's happening?

A senior nun, the ABBESS, keeps pace but the guard answers:

KINGSGUARD #1
You're leaving this place.

ABBESS
This was an assassination attempt,
you were nearly poisoned --

MARY
But who --

ABBESS
Someone with ties to the Protestant throne of England, no doubt --

KINGSGUARD #1
They'll be found and dealt with.

ANOTHER ANGLE - ROUNDING A CORNER - still rushing --

MARY
...poor Sister Agnes, I didn't know --

ABBESS
That she was your taster.
(then)
Every meal you've eaten has been tested for poison since you left your mother's breast. Mary, you are the Queen of Scotland.

We stay in MARY'S POV as we SLAM through the doorway into GLARING DAYLIGHT --

EXT. CONVENT - DAY

-- obscuring the fact, for the moment, that a short period of time has passed.

WIDEN ON MARY -- TRANSFORMED. No longer a convent girl, she is a YOUNG QUEEN. Wearing a gorgeous gown, jewels, a floor length cloak -- she is stunning, regal.

Mary moves forward, her WOLFHOUND following faithfully. ROWS of CONVENT GIRLS standing on either side of her path. They stare, slack-jawed, in their drab uniforms. NUNS behind them in small clusters. And in the distance:

An ARMY OF GUARDS waiting in FORMATION. An ornate CARRIAGE, a FOOTMAN unfolding upholstered steps, extra horses, provisions, silks for shading, all for our young queen.

ON MARY walking as the Abbess steps forward to say goodbye.

MARY
I'm not sure I'm ready...

ABBESS
To leave here or marry the future king of France?

MARY

Both.

The nun embraces her. Quietly, aware of the French guards:

ABBESS
You're doing this for your faith, for your people, for Scotland.
(reassuring)
He will love you.

MARY
I'm not sure that matters.

ABBESS
(warmly)
It does to you.

Mary's look tells us the nun is right as we --

EXT. CONVENT - MOMENTS LATER

At the CARRIAGE now, Mary about to step inside when young Rose breaks from the pack, races to her. Hands Mary a small DOLL made from twigs and yarn (with a girl's features).

ROSE
I made it to protect you.

MARY
Protect me from what?

ROSE
Ghosts. They say the castle's haunted. A blind priest slaughtered, a young girl whose face is a ruin, she hides it --

MARY
(comforting, shush now)
I've lived at French Court before, you know, until I was your age. I never saw any ghosts.

ROSE
But what if they saw *you*.

A chill up Mary's spine as the procession begins to shift into gear, a footman taking her elbow -- it's time to go.

ON MARY - inside her carriage now, door shut; secured, locked away, anxious but hopeful. Leaving the other girls and her childhood behind. Off Mary's grand exit:

EXT. FRENCH CASTLE - DAY

Establishing the structure, its towers and walls, a wide stream winding through low grasses. A thick forest nearby, and in the far distance, some villages.

CHYRON - PALACE OF FONTAINEBLEAU - COURT OF KING HENRY II

INT. FRENCH CASTLE - CORRIDOR

FRANCIS II, 15, and heir to the French throne, lopes toward a meeting. Handsome, thoughtful, dishevelled, late.

He rounds a corner, finds his half-brother, SEBASTIAN, 17, gorgeous with an edgy charm born of being a King's bastard, waiting outside the Queen's chambers. (Other guards standing post.) The brothers greet with wry smiles. Faux-formal:

FRANCIS
Sebastian.

BASH
Francis. They were looking for you everywhere.

Bash pointedly eyes Francis's untucked shirt-tail, amused.

FRANCIS
Shut up. I was riding.

BASH
Really. Who?

Francis gives Bash a friendly shove. It's playful and bonding and Bash takes it as such. Francis eyes the door:

FRANCIS
So Bash, how's the mood?

BASH
Our father's or the mood in general? Tense, to both. Planning for your sister Elisabeth's wedding.

FRANCIS
Is your mother in there?

BASH
Only royals and their attendants allowed. But *your* mother's in fine form. God save you.
(starts to go)
I'm off now that they've found you --

FRANCIS
Lucky bastard.

Francis jokes without malice, but as he pushes into his father's chambers, we stay on Bash. The reference stings.

EXT. FRENCH CASTLE - QUEEN CATHERINE'S CHAMBERS - DAY

We're with Francis as he enters the suite. A very large, formal main room, where CATHERINE DE MEDICI, Queen Consort (early 30's, Italian-born, hard-eyed, contained but feral), and Francis's father, HENRY II (also early 30's, strapping, fit, confident), bicker in hushed tones. An old disagreement rekindled.

In the b.g, in an anteroom, out of earshot, PRINCESS ELISABETH (18, pretty) reviews fabric, food, and sketches for her wedding, with the help of a stern Queen's lady (JEANNETTE LOUISE, 40) and a few highborn girls. Elisabeth nods toward her brother, Francis, who settles in the main room, closer to their parents' debate, unreadable.

QUEEN CATHERINE
Mary should be protected. Hidden --

KING HENRY
(calling bullshit)
So you've claimed. You sent her away for her *education* and her *health* too. I let you because it served my ends. It doesn't any longer. Not to mention, there's been an attempt on her life.

Watching from the b.g. group is NATALIA, 16, a delicate, highborn Italian girl. Hoping to catch Francis's eye during --

QUEEN CATHERINE
She's not an orphan. Her mother's ruling Scotland in her stead, let her protect Mary there.

KING HENRY
Those were not the terms.

Unnoticed, Elisabeth moves closer with a small pastry.

QUEEN CATHERINE
(tries another tack)
There are those who say too many alliances make a king look weak.

KING HENRY
We don't need alliances? Then why were you so keen to sell our daughter to Spain?

ELISABETH
Father!

He turns to his daughter unapologetically, eyes the pastry.

KING HENRY
Be a good princess, Elisabeth, and practice your Spanish.

Catherine tastes the pastry's gold leaf, disapproving.

QUEEN CATHERINE
It lacks the bitterness of a better gold. Tell them it won't do.

Elisabeth sighs, returns to her wedding planning area. The Queen turns, finally acknowledging Francis with a look.

FRANCIS
I'm told I was needed. Or should I just come back on my wedding day? You've chosen my wife, have you set the date, too?

KING HENRY
Here's the date: when I say so. Or England turns its sword in our direction.
(adds, less gruff)
She's on her way.

FRANCIS
Mary Stuart, you mean. I heard.

KING HENRY
And her ladies-in-waiting. Three titled, the other ridiculously rich.

QUEEN CATHERINE
(to King, a dig)
Just your type. I remember them.

The King looks from Catherine to his son.

KING HENRY
They say *your* bride's a beauty, at least. And she has a country, and an army, should you need it.
(to Queen, back at ya)
Not just a big pile of money.

And he exits. Catherine angles closer, reminding:

QUEEN CATHERINE
He's right about one thing. My money funds the realm. Your father might talk like a king, but your wedding won't happen until I say so.

Catherine heads back to join her daughter Elisabeth. Francis looks across the way to Natalia. Her gaze and small smile searching for some affirmation. He gives her a slight nod, confirming their connection, but goes --

EXT. SCOTLAND - HARBOR - DAY

A bustling harbor. A large SHIP in the distance. Three girls are reunited for their journey. GREER, 15, wealthy but lacking title, and AILLIE, 14, tomboyish but capable of blossoming, hug, thrilled to be together again. KENNA, 15, vibrant, daring, marvels as Greer's things go aboard.

GREER
Kenna, Aillie, it's been too long --

KENNA
Greer, these can't all be clothes!

GREER
(shrugs, wry)
There's jewelry and silver too.

KENNA
I can't believe we're going back to France! Ladies at Mary's side.

GREER
(what's the big surprise?)
It's only been planned since we were infants.

AILLIE
But we weren't supposed to return until next year. It's because of the poisoning --

KENNA
It's because Mary and Francis are nearly of age. Best to get our young queen in the game before the prince's eye wanders.

AILLIE
But the marriage is already arranged.

KENNA
As an agreement between Scotland and France. But allegiances can shift. Passions can bloom beyond control...
(nods, amused)
Lola can warn Mary *all* about that.

The girls follow Kenna's gaze, and meaning, to:

A COUPLE entwined behind a carriage, mostly protected from view. We see LOLA, 15, pretty, with her hands entangled in a boy's hair, hips and lips pressed to his...

KENNA (CONT'D)
Lola better be careful. They check girls before marriage in France.

GREER
Just the nobles...

Kenna shakes her head, *not what I've heard,* as:

AILLIE
Check them? You mean --

KENNA
For purity. You have to be a virgin. You must know that.

AILLIE
But how do they...

KENNA
It's all very medical, over with quickly, quick as your chance of marrying anyone good if you fail.

GREER
(feels insecure)
Some of us start out with better chances than others.
(to Aillee, then Kenna)
You're both titled. Your father's a count, yours an earl --

KENNA
And you'll be titled too, before you know it.
(so excited)
We're going to live at French Court. We'll meet rich, powerful men from dozens of countries. Girls like us? We can't lose.

Lola has pried herself from her boyfriend. Joins them now. Accepts the hug from Greer but glancing to the boyfriend.

LOLA
I'm so excited, and so, so sad. Colin says he'll wait for me.

GREER
Until when? We might never be back in Scotland again. You do know that. Our lives belong to Mary now.

The reality of this settles. But Aillie is firm, positive.

AILLIE
We're together, we're friends, we're Scots. Mary belongs to us.

INT. FRENCH CASTLE - NOSTRADAMUS'S LAIR - DAY

NOSTRADAMUS, 40's, the Queen's Wizard Prophet, shows her a sick-smelling grey-green paste. As Catherine gets a whiff --

QUEEN CATHERINE
...That's disgusting.

NOSTRADAMUS
Where she puts it, he won't smell it. Unless he's a very good husband. You do want Elisabeth to bear sons?

QUEEN CATHERINE
(bitter on this topic)
As soon as possible, or what is a wife's value? But what about my son, Francis? What do your visions tell you about his future? What have you seen?

NOSTRADAMUS
There are images forming, but as yet they're fleeting and unclear.

NOSTRADAMUS (CONT'D)
Maybe if you were more specific about your concerns...

QUEEN CATHERINE
What does Mary's return mean?

NOSTRADAMUS
Are you worried the alliance weakens France?

QUEEN CATHERINE
(fuck France)
Let Henry worry about France.
(this is personal)
Will my son love her? Will she love him? How do I control a daughter-in-law who is queen in her own right?

NOSTRADAMUS
Is that what bothers you, her power, or the fact that she's young and pretty? Is there anyone you want your son to marry?

QUEEN CATHERINE
I'd prefer you conjure my son's heirs out of a cauldron. But as that can't be done, I'd settle for someone I could influence. Because if my husband hates me, and my son, the future king, falls under his wife's sway, where does that leave me?

NOSTRADAMUS
Vulnerable. You don't need my magic to tell you that. I say this with loyalty to you.

QUEEN CATHERINE
(warns, mocking)
I've just had a vision... I see *you*, beheaded, at my command. Said with gratitude for the secrets we share.

NOSTRADAMUS
Perhaps a softer approach with the young queen would serve your ends. Avoid talk of executions in favor of motherly advice.
(as she seethes)
Be patient, answers will come.

INT. FRENCH CASTLE - HALLWAY - DAY

We're CLOSE ON a young prince, HANK, 7, rolling a marble down the floor, out of frame. Sits criss-cross, chatting away:

HANK
...My sister's got Spain, it's a country she won in a wedding. Bash says that's not how it works, but Mother says don't listen to him, he'll never be King, he'll never really be anything.

The marble rolls back to him from his UNSEEN FRIEND as he rambles on. Back and forth the marble goes calmly as:

HANK (CONT'D)
You know who I listen to? You. You know more than any of them.
(for example)
When I told the boy at the stables you knew the foal would breech, that it would die, he couldn't believe it.

He waits but this time the marble doesn't come back.

HANK (CONT'D)
What is it?... Are you angry?

Still no marble. We angle up the long, empty corridor.

HANK (CONT'D)
Don't go, I didn't tell anyone about *you*, just what you said.
(still no response)
Talk to me...Please.

Rising, moving anxiously down the corridor. He's scared of this friend... As he rounds a corner into a darkened area and finds... No one. Then reacts as he looks down and sees:

The glass marble's been CRUSHED, nothing but shards and dust.

HANK (CONT'D)
I'm sorry.

He doesn't wait long for forgiveness. Turns, picking up his pace until he's running off. REVERSE ANGLE as we:

Look out from the dark recess now, HEARING hooves, the low grumble of conversation outside. A leaded window in sight.

We're with *someone* (this is CLARISSA, though we don't reveal her fully) moving to the window. A HAND, pale but dirty, fingernails bitten to the quick, rests on the window frame, frayed edges on her dirty gown. Looking out to:

EXT. FRENCH CASTLE - ENTRANCE & COURTYARD - DAY

REVERSE ANGLE -- at a distance. A small window encases a shape that *might be a girl* -- obscured by the rippled glass. Her head oddly shaped, as if something covered it completely.

In the foreground, just inside the open gates, Kenna, Greer, Lola and Aillie, are exiting carriages, looking towards --

Mary's arrival. Dozens of Kingsguards, her ornate carriage, and Mary stepping out of it. Rushing to her friends.

INT. FRENCH CASTLE - VARIOUS - DAY

HEAR horns announcing the arrival. A quick series of shots:

King Henry strides away from camera, his back to us, a WOMAN who could be the queen (but we'll reveal later is Diane) falling in step near him, guards and handmaids following.

In another area, Francis makes his way. Sees Bash hanging around, holding back, and nods for him to come along.

EXT. FRENCH CASTLE - COURTYARD

Mary hugs each of her friends, who chat and primp amongst themselves as she releases them, all casting anxious glances toward the castle as people begin to spill out.

MARY
Lola, Greer, Kenna! I'm so glad you're here.
(a special hug for)
Aillee, we're all together again.

Seeing Mary's hair is loose and wild, Greer quickly winds it.

GREER
Oh Mary, your hair, didn't the nuns teach you anything --

Amused but not caring, Mary shakes it free as quickly as Greer has loosely wound it. Laughs as --

AILLIE
Look, they're here, they're coming --

ON THE KING a distance away, positioning for Mary's group's approach. Henry's with his coterie and the WOMAN we glimpsed earlier, his mistress, DIANE de Poitiers, a very sexy 40.

MARY
There's the King, but is that Catherine...?

LOLA
(eager to share)
That's Diane de Poitiers, his mistress. The rumors *are* true --

KENNA
That is bold.

The King, as well as a group of YOUNG MEN (SQUIRES), Francis's men, already checking out our girls. Bash, pushing out in front of them. The girls shyly catch the men's appreciative stares, look away, particularly when the King's gaze passes over them. All but Kenna who meets the King's look for a moment. Her eyes glitter, amused, daring.

Mary is preoccupied, scanning the court for Francis as Bash crosses, gets a warm nod from the King, stands by Diane.

KENNA (CONT'D)
Is that Francis? He's gorgeous...

MARY
That's not Francis, I know it isn't.

From another area, QUEEN CATHERINE and her ladies and guards. The girls scan the gathering, Mary still seeking Francis...

ON FRANCIS -- approaching, unnoticed, except by Mary. Their gaze locks and it is electric. He seems thrown by her beauty, stopping momentarily to take it in. To herself, a wide smile forming as he nears -- what a *relief*, what *luck*...

MARY (CONT'D)
I don't believe it...

Standing before her now, Francis bows slightly.

FRANCIS
Your Grace.

MARY
Call me Mary, please.

FRANCIS
Francis.

She's nervous but also exuberant, open, taking in the castle.

MARY
The castle seems bigger, how is that possible? And you too, of course.

FRANCIS
(charmed by her candor)
Is that such a surprise?

From a distance, we see Natalia is among the high-borns of court flanking the King. She sees Mary and Francis's easy chemistry as an unguarded Mary cheerfully rambles on:

MARY
No. Especially since your legs were always longer than mine. I hated that when we were young, I was always chasing after you, but now...

He's strapping and cute. Mary blushes, adds quickly:

MARY (CONT'D)
Now it suits you.

Francis can't help but smile. A jealous Natalia sees this too, and she's not the only one...

From a distance, Nostradamus now stands with Queen Catherine, both watching as Mary and Francis talk, making their way toward the King. Catherine sees Nostradamus's grim concern.

CATHERINE
What is it? You've had a vision...

NOSTRADAMUS
It's clear now. I saw your son's future, with Mary, their union...

CATHERINE
Say it.

NOSTRADAMUS
She will cost Francis his life.

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

INT. CASTLE - GREAT HALL - DAY

Queen Catherine and Princess Elisabeth lead Mary and her friends through the castle; a dozen maids trail, in service.

QUEEN CATHERINE
...We're thrilled you're back to stay, and in time for Elisabeth's wedding, too.

Catherine gently guides Mary away from the pack under:

QUEEN CATHERINE (CONT'D)
Her groom, Phillip of Spain, has arrived, he's taken the west tower, your rooms are in the south...
(gossipy, just to Mary)
What are we going to do about your friends *clothes*?
(a second blow)
At least you've been locked away in a convent. You have an excuse.

Speaking to the group again:

QUEEN CATHERINE (CONT'D)
This is a busy week, so many visiting royals and dignitaries.
(to Mary, generously)
Word of your arrival has spread. All eyes will be on you. After the bride, of course. Please, get settled...
(taking her leave)
My lady, Jeannette-Louise will prepare you with all you need.

On our girls -- expectant, excited:

INT. FRENCH CASTLE - VARIOUS BEDCHAMBERS

As each girl is shown to her room:

MARY - has the most opulent room of all. The bed, closets and chairs laden with clothes, jewels. Her DOG settles as she puts the small, vaguely creepy DOLL on a table near her bed. Takes in her surroundings. Nervous but happy.

GREER - finds her closet stocked as well. Fingers the rich fabrics, finding the quality a bit lacking in some areas.

KENNA - settles in a warm bath. Reaches for a sponge. Only to have it taken from her. There are maids in waiting to soap her hair, wash her feet... *fabulous* -- she loves it.

LOLA - snug in all the trappings, but only focused on a LOVE LETTER addressed to her, signed "Colin." Pining for him.

AILLIE - is in a new dress, hating the corset being cinched around her, hair combed, lips stained a deeper crimson.

WIDEN on her to reveal we are:

INT. CASTLE - GIRLS' COMMON AREA - DAY

Where all the girls have new hair (striking, some preposterously high "*Killers*" *video-ish)* and wardrobe (*FreePeople* meets *Vivienne Westwood*-runway). They look older, wildly gorgeous, amazed by their transformations.

LOLA
I wish Colin could see me, he'd ask to marry me in a second. I definitely look of age now, we *all* do.

Aillie wipes her lipstain and powder off with a forearm.

Mary takes in her reflection, emotions mixed as we PRE-LAP:

QUEEN'S EMISSARY (V.O.)
You have returned to the Court of Henry II at your own Queen's bidding, but you are no longer simply Mary's little playmates...

TIME CUT:

The Queen's Emissary, Lady Jeannette-Louise, prattles on as Bash enters. Lingers on the sidelines. The girls stealing glances of him under:

QUEEN'S EMISSARY (CONT'D)
You must counsel her, prepare her, account for her. Take responsibility for her as she has for you. For your lives and well being...
(reviews her list)
For the Princess Elisabeth's wedding, as with any event, you must review and acquaint yourselves, and Mary, with the guests. Their titles, customs, language. Who among you is fluent in Italian?

AILLIE
I suppose I am --

QUEEN'S EMISSARY
You'll sit next to the Pope's cousin.

Making his presence known. To the emissary:

BASH
The King sent me with a few updates and he'd like me to report back. If your seating chart can wait.
(having trumped her)
It's a private matter. We're fine on our own. I'll behave, I swear.

She doesn't like it but starts out. To the servants:

BASH (CONT'D)
By on our own I meant on our own. Thank you.

A look from the emissary and the servants exit too, as:

BASH (CONT'D)
Ladies, your Grace. I'm Sebastian -- Bash -- I remember you though I doubt you remember me. From years ago, back when I kept a lower profile.

MARY
And here you are now. In our private chambers. Is that proper?

BASH
If the King says so. There, message one, delivered.

He clocks Mary's amusement; likes it. Presses on:

BASH (CONT'D)
Message two, also related to hierarchy -- and forgive me for being blunt, but as someone born with technically <u>no</u> standing, I get to say things no one else wants to -- watch what you say around your servants. While they might come to know *you* intimately, you'll never know them.

MARY
You speak as if they've something to hide and you know it.

KENNA
Are there Protestants among them?

BASH
Some, I'm sure. Others believe in all manner of gods. The moon, the sun, a wide variety of beasts --

GREER
You mean Druids and Pagans --

LOLA
There was talk in the village of secret altars, blood rituals --

KENNA
-- or some *thing* that lives in the woods that requires human sacrifice.

AILLIE
Are you saying we're in danger?

BASH
Are you human?
(then, grinning)
Don't look so scared. Peasants tell tales to keep each other out of the woods. To cut the competition for the best hunting. Or poaching.

AILLIE
What about the girl? The barefoot girl who hides her face? Should we be careful of her too?

Aillie's tone more wary, less thrilled by horror stories. Mary's surprised, recalling the young convent girl's fears.

MARY
You've heard about this?

BASH
Let me guess. From a servant?

Aillie blushes -- it's true.

BASH (CONT'D)
Making friends already. There's plenty to worry about within these walls, but that has nothing to do with spirits. Your Grace.

He exits. The girls look to each other. *He is so sexy.*

GREER
Okay, *I'll* say it. If he's been here all along, how did we miss him?

KENNA
He was just the king's bastard and we were nine. Why does he have to be so utterly un-marriagable?

GREER
Don't count him out. He obviously has the King's favor now. Aside from Mary, I bet he gets anything, or anyone, he wants.

A ripple of possibility which leaves Aillie uneasy.

AILLIE
You know what I want? To explore. He banished the servants, we're finally alone, who's with me?

INT. CASTLE - CORRIDOR - DAY

Mary, Kenna, Aillie, Lola and Greer explore the castle.

AILLIE
...I want to go to the stables, I'm dying to go for a ride --

KENNA
Let's go to the Small Hall, maybe some of those guests have arrived --

GREER
First the kitchen. I'm starving.

MARY
Go. I'll find you later. There's something I want to see.

Mary peels off her own way as the girls go another.

INT. CASTLE - KITCHEN - DAY

A half dozen workers prepare the next meal, shocked when Kenna, Lola, Aillie and Greer push through, playful:

KENNA
Pastries and marzipan to our chambers, please --

AILLIE
And chocolate, lots of it --

Swiping gorgeous pastries and sweets as they go. Greer trailing, grabbing a last powdered confection on her way out. The servants, a young, handsome LEITH (17) among them, stare -- some amused, others annoyed.

The girls have scurried around the corner, all but Greer, who tugs at her skirt, caught on some hardware.

GREER
Oh, come on --

Leith's at her side. Trying to get close enough to free her.

LEITH
Wait, hold on, almost --

His hands are on her as he guides her body to a position where he can tug the dress free. She notices... he's hot. They're still close, too close, as he meets her gaze.

LEITH (CONT'D)
You shouldn't have done that.

She's surprised -- is he reprimanding her? Gives it back:

GREER
Come into the kitchen or let a servant put his hands on me?

He gently turns her face so we see the POWDERED SUGAR dusted around her full lips. Firm, concerned, no bullshit:

LEITH
Eaten food that's un-tasted. Didn't you hear what happened to your Queen?

The poison. Greer's genuinely unnerved, knows he's right.

GREER
I've been away from her for so long. I just... I let my guard down.

LEITH
Well don't. My lady.

He turns, goes back to his work. Greer watches him, feeling he's both protected and challenged her. Intrigued.

INT. CASTLE - ANOTHER AREA - DAY

Mary moves through the castle as we HEAR - THE LAUGHTER OF CHILDREN. From Mary's POV, it seems she sees:

Francis and Mary, at AGE 7, racing down the hallway, playing.

OUT OF FLASHBACK - Mary has arrived at a door. She opens it gently (this is a special place to her), goes into:

INT. CASTLE - "YOUNG" MARY'S CHAMBERS - DAY

Some youthful trappings, most dusty, a LARGE bed with a roughly stitched FEATHER MATTRESS, doors to some ante-rooms.

Mary moves around the room, warmed by memories, taking in some left behind items (a rocking horse, a child's chair), when she HEARS something. A muffled SCRAPING. Mary moves toward a closed door, a CREAK underfoot... when the door OPENS. Standing before her is Francis. His shirt loose, smudged, hair dishevelled, hands dirty. Sexy. Overlapping:

FRANCIS
Mary --

MARY
Francis -- I didn't know --

FRANCIS
What are you doing in here?

MARY
I was exploring, and these are my old rooms. Don't you remember --

FRANCIS
(sharper than he means to)
Not anymore, no one comes up here --

MARY
Except you.
(her old chambers...)
That's odd. Why *do* you --

Then she sees it. In the background, a large square stone, sharpening instruments, a series of unfinished KNIVES.

MARY (CONT'D)
What is that?
(off his hesitancy)
Is all this yours?

His tone softens, because he's embarrassed to be found out in this way. She moves forward, taking it in as:

FRANCIS
I make knives, and swords. At least I'm trying to learn.

MARY
(amused, playful)
To be a bladesmith? Is that a requirement for future kings now?

FRANCIS
When you say it like that, it's ridiculous, yes --

MARY
I think it's fantastic. You made all these? Why?

Her genuine enthusiasm is hard to resist. And then there's the fact that she might actually *understand*...

FRANCIS
...I guess I can't help thinking, a man, even a king, should have *some* kind of skill.

MARY
You'll be a great ruler some day, isn't that enough?

FRANCIS
I hope I will be, but... I meant, a real skill. That I didn't inherit -- wasn't given to me and can't be taken away. My brother, I mean, my half-brother, Bash, has many. He wants to learn something, he does it, he wants to go somewhere, he goes. They don't worry so much about him dying that they don't let him live.

MARY
(realizes)
...Because he'll never be King.
(then, wry)
I can milk a goat and cut peat for the fire. The nuns, you know.

FRANCIS
Impressive.

He smiles. Likes her <u>in spite of himself</u>. So he tries to shift the topic, going back to his swords, adding lightly:

FRANCIS (CONT'D)
I guess if there were ever some uprising that sent my line into hiding, I could get by as a blacksmith --

She cuts him off -- her support so simple, clear, and real.

MARY
But I'd save you.

He stares -- no hiding the fact he's blown away by her.

MARY (CONT'D)
We'd go to Scotland and rule there.

...Mary just starting to feel overwhelmed by their connection when Francis breaks it. Hardly master of his own fate yet:

FRANCIS
Hard to imagine us going anywhere any other way, as we're not even allowed to leave the castle unguarded.

Mary raises an eyebrow - indicating otherwise. But he's turned back to his swords and doesn't see it.

INT. FRANCIS'S CHAMBERS - DAY

Francis enters to find Natalia waiting for him. She tugs at some laces, undoing her clothes. Young, nervous, determined:

FRANCIS
Natalia... No.

NATALIA
We've been so good, for months. I don't want to wait any more --

Layers of her clothes dropping. Seeing his reluctance.

NATALIA (CONT'D)
Is it Mary? You seemed surprised by her beauty. Taken with her.

FRANCIS
We're engaged.

NATALIA
And there's nothing you can do about that, I know. But you have time.
(moves closer)
(MORE)

NATALIA (CONT'D)
Give it time. Could you do that for me?

She takes his hand. Puts it somewhere below her waist.

NATALIA (CONT'D)
Could you do this for me?
(adds)
There are ways to be safe, no one has to know, this is just us --

He looks her in the eyes -- *please understand*.

FRANCIS
That's not how my life is ever going to be. Just me and someone else.

NATALIA
Exactly.

Before we know what Francis will do --

EXT. CASTLE - NEAR THE STREAM - DAY

Mary and Aillie are near the wide but shallow stream. Mary's WOLFHOUND is with them, angling through the grasses as Mary collects small, pretty rocks, agates, along the shoreline.

AILLIE
...I can't believe the door in the old Keep is still unlocked.

MARY
It looked like it hadn't been opened since we were last here.

AILLIE
You should tell Francis about it. If you're going to meet alone, and I'm not saying you should, you need to be careful.

MARY
It wasn't a meeting. We weren't alone on purpose. He's... I...

Aillie knows her friend. Knows Mary's smile and stammering means she's just beginning to <u>hope</u>. Aillie can tell:

AILLIE
You like him. You were children together, why wouldn't you?

MARY
Because it's all so forced now. I thought, what are the odds? But...

AILLIE
But...?

MARY
What if this isn't just *our* fate, what if it <u>is</u> Fate? What if we actually belong together? Wouldn't that be amazing.

Mary laughs, more hopeful than convinced. Aillie loves it.

AILLIE
<u>Yes.</u> It would.

The girls happy, at ease as Mary picks some pretty stones --

ANOTHER POV - watching them. The dog senses *something,* doesn't like it. Turns in our direction, uneasy, growling.

On Mary and Aillie as the dog lunges toward the tall grasses. Aggressively barking and starting off toward the woods. Startling Mary, who <u>drops some of the stones</u> she's collected.

MARY
Stirling, no! Come! Now!

The dog hesitates, turning back, but distracted, on guard.

From a distance, we see Mary, Aillie and the dog head back toward the castle. <u>The stones she dropped</u> left behind.

INT. FRENCH CASTLE - HALLWAY/FRANCIS'S CHAMBERS - DAY

Mary approaches, upbeat, raps on Francis's door. A few beats before he opens. Surprised, then more abrupt, unwelcoming:

FRANCIS
Mary. What is it?

She feels the chill immediately and is thrown by it.

MARY
I brought you something, to decorate your swords.

He ignores the small stones, agates, in her hand.

FRANCIS
Next time, you should be announced. My page --

MARY
I don't understand... Why do you sound so...

Cold. Shitty. Busted. He hesitates, then:

FRANCIS
You shouldn't be here now.

MARY
Why?... Are you alone?
(off his silence)
Are you *with* someone?

FRANCIS
If you're ever going to be Queen of France, you should know something. Kings don't answer to their wives.

Mary looks stunned, and pissed, as he closes the door on her.

Staying with Francis as he holds and we see his bed is still made. No one else here at all. He used the moment to push Mary away purposefully, but he didn't like hurting her.

In the hallway, Mary turns on her heels and stalks off.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

EXT. CASTLE - NEAR THE STREAM - DAY

Back at the stream, Mary fumes. Takes the small stones she'd brought to Francis and HURLS them toward the water. They spray across the tall grasses, rustling some ducks and birds. Mary's WOLFHOUND alerts, and bounds off, giving chase.

MARY
Stirling, not again, leave it...

The dog ignores her, after something, going INTO THE FOREST.

MARY (CONT'D)
Stirling, no, wait!

Mary races after the dog.

INT. FOREST - DAY

Mary walks, making her way through the thickening trees.

MARY
Stirling, come, where are you?
Stirling? Here, boy...

A FLASH of what looks like her dog dashing between trees. Mary follows. Hearing RUSTLING ahead and going after it.

ANOTHER POV - watching Mary pass and following at a good distance. Methodical as a hunter tracking its prey.

INT. FRENCH CASTLE - LOLA'S CHAMBERS - DAY

A SERVANT crosses near Lola's bath as she soaks, eyes closed. A WOMAN'S HANDS shampoo, then reach out of frame. A MAN'S hands in their place. Warm water poured, massaging her head, neck... down further. Lola sits up with a start. Sees:

LOLA
Colin! I don't believe it!

Smiling at her, the room cleared of everyone else. She starts out of the tub, then slinks down to cover her nakedness.

LOLA (CONT'D)
Oh no --

COLIN
Oh <u>yes</u>.

He laughs but turns, playfully covers his eyes. She quickly climbs out, grabs something to cover herself, and he's on her, clinging to each other with a flurry of words.

LOLA (CONT'D)
What are you doing here, you can't be here, how did you get in?

COLIN
I've been thinking of you from the moment you got on that boat. I borrowed money and left the next day.

LOLA
I want you to stay, but we'll be found out... We need permission.

Colin looks unsure but willing. Off Lola's determination:

EXT. WOODS - DAY

Darkening under the thick canopy of trees. Mary pushes through the woods, using the sharp edge of an ARROW to MARK TREES. Her face is scratched from branches, her thin-soled shoes nearly destroyed. No sign of the dog, and worse yet... She finds a MARK she'd already cut into the bark of a tree.

MARY
No... I've gone in a circle.
(calls out, pissed)
Stirling! You got us lost!
Stirling, where are you?

No response. Irritated but driven, Mary pushes on.

INT. FRENCH CASTLE - QUEEN CATHERINE'S CHAMBERS - DAY

Lola and Colin sit before a seemingly empathetic Queen Catherine. They've been explaining their situation.

QUEEN CATHERINE
What a grand, romantic gesture. Does your Queen know about your guest?

LOLA
I thought she'd be at the fitting, for finishing touches, but she wasn't. But Mary's met Colin, she knows his people.

QUEEN CATHERINE
A cousin of her father, James?

COLIN
My father served him until the day King James died.
(MORE)

COLIN (CONT'D)
His Grace was generous, he granted my father large holdings... but... we're no relation.

Low standing for a highborn. Catherine likes that.

QUEEN CATHERINE
A servant. Haven't you come far.

An idea forming, seeing a pawn in front of her...

QUEEN CATHERINE (CONT'D)
I love a success story. Sit. Tell me all about your people's rise.

To Lola, reassuring, friendly even in her dismissal:

QUEEN CATHERINE (CONT'D)
You need to find Mary and keep her on task. So we can all enjoy the wedding together.
(to Colin)
And after a few days, we'll arrange comfortable passage home for you.

Lola smiles at Colin, thrilled, and hurries out as a nervous Colin settles in for what will be a life-altering chat.

INT. CASTLE - GIRLS' COMMON AREA - DAY

A LONG TROUGH, roughly hewn, filled with sand. The girls, including Elisabeth and her ladies, bury JEWELS when Aillie enters, concerned. Moves to Kenna, Greer and a happy Lola.

LOLA
Colin's staying for the wedding!

Handing a spoon, nods to bowls filled with small jewels:

KENNA
That's great news. We're on the last of the favors. Rubies, emeralds and diamonds there, semi-precious stones in that bowl. Bury them deep, so the guests really have to dig. Make them *earn* them.

GREER
Did you see Mary? The wedding's in hours, she didn't show up for the fitting, or her hair --

AILLIE
I thought she was with you. But you know Mary, she hates her hair done...

The girls trade looks - their one job and they botched it.

GREER
We'll be blamed for this you know. She does what she likes, and we'll be blamed.

INT. KING HENRY'S CHAMBERS - DAY

Entering with Queen Catherine, finding her husband ensconced with his mistress, Diane. Also Bash, Francis, and Henry's personal KINGSGUARD, plus a MID-LEVEL GUARD, who has brought a LOWER GUARD (looking shabbier and very nervous).

LOWER GUARD
...we'd seen the girls taking in the grounds, over by the stream, before --

BASH
But you saw a girl. You're sure.

QUEEN CATHERINE
I thought we were meeting to work out the details of seating at the church. What's this about a girl?

DIANE
We just heard that Mary's missing.

QUEEN CATHERINE
Have 'we'? Perhaps she didn't know to report to my husband's mistress.

HENRY
Catherine. He said she went into the woods.

Catherine knows: this warrants concern. To the lower guard:

QUEEN CATHERINE
You lost a queen, did you?

LOWER GUARD
I can't say it was her, for sure. Those girls run in a pack, they're all pretty --

The mid-level guard SLASHES the lower's cheek. The man yelps, covers his wound, blood seeping through his fingers...

MID-LEVEL GUARD
You'll be anything but if she doesn't come back from those woods --

Henry holds up a hand, stops the abuse, but adds a warning.

KING HENRY
-- in the same condition she entered them. Bash, take some men --

FRANCIS
I'm going too --

KING HENRY
Bash knows these dangers. You stay where you're useful. Wherever that is.

Bash feels bad, catches Francis's gaze. Francis' look is hard -- not wanting the favorite-son's pity.

EXT. FRENCH CASTLE - NIGHT

Darkness all around. The castle lit in the distance.

INT. CASTLE - GREAT HALL - NIGHT

Servants hurry, laying out food and flowers for the feast.

INT. MARY'S CHAMBERS - NIGHT

Mary's gown, shoes and jewelry laid out. Her servants waiting nervously, not sure what to do until her return.

INT. WOODS - NIGHT

Mary follows a tiny stream. Her satin-shoes torn, feet bloodied. She's scratched, tired, and dirty when she HEARS:

What sounds like the WHIMPERING OF A DOG up ahead.

INT. SMALL CLEARING - NIGHT - MOMENTS LATER

Mary enters cautiously. A low, canine GROWL seems to come from a cluster of rocks in the distance -- the dark entrance to a low cave. She moves closer, CRUNCHING what appear to be some small animal BONES underfoot. More bones clustered closer to the cave's opening.

On a rock, a dark stain. Mary wets her finger, drags it across, and we see what now looks like BLOOD on her fingertip. From the cave, a distant, muffled whine, like an animal in pain. Closer now, uneasy:

MARY
Stirling? Here boy...

Suddenly a MURDER OF CROWS fly out, surrounding Mary. She waves them away as she SCREAMS --

INT. FOREST - NIGHT

Bash on horseback, a half-dozen Kingsguards spread out around him. He hears her DISTANT SCREAM and kicks his horse.

INT. FOREST - ANOTHER AREA - NIGHT

Mary crashes through the low underbrush, running, when something bursts through the trees, GRABBING HER.

TIGHT ON MARY - wresting from a tight, high embrace, pushing off and tumbling to the ground, bringing her assailant down with her. A tangle of clothes covering them both, Mary using all her force, landing a solid punch and some serious kicks, her attacker rolling off her with --

BASH
Dear God, would you stop?!

She stares at Bash in shock. Sees his horse, realizes Bash had tried to pull her up onto it. His hand to his jaw as he struggles to get up. Sees her, skirt hiked, bodice loose...

BASH (CONT'D)
Are you trying to kill me? I'm out here trying to save you --

MARY
I thought I was being attacked, you don't just grab a person, out of nowhere --

BASH
(equally vehement)
And you don't run away from the castle. Young girls, royals, queens, do not leave alone --

MARY
(furious, exhausted rant)
My dog ran away because I was at the stream because your brother's a moody, arrogant ass, and I got lost and scared by these awful birds, and my feet hurt, and believe me --
(off her feet/his boots)
(MORE)

MARY (CONT'D)
-- when I am queen in practice and not just name, women will be given *actual shoes*!

Bash takes her in...takes her *all* in. A wry grin forming:

BASH
You really think my brother's an ass?
(moves closer, playful)
We're half-brothers, nothing in common but our father, really.

He stops, smile fading. He's seen something behind her.

BASH (CONT'D)
...We should go.

Something moving through the trees. A tense beat as Mary senses it too... When what appears is Mary's WOLFHOUND, *something* in his mouth.

MARY
Stirling, c'mere...what is that?
Drop it. I said drop it --

A DESICCATED FOREARM. Human. Skin intact, drained of blood. Bash yanks her, hard now, over to his horse. His GUARDS appearing now, out of the forest, joining them.

BASH
We're leaving here, now. Mary --

Both on his horse now, Mary clings to Bash as they tear off.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

INT. CASTLE - GIRLS' QUARTERS - COMMON AREA - NIGHT

Mary is being readied for the wedding. A LADY'S MAID tugs at her hair, her DOG settled nearby, when the door thuds open. Lola, Kenna, Greer and Aillie burst in. Almost overlapping:

AILLIE
Thank goodness they found you! We thought you might miss the wedding --

KENNA
Is it true, what they're saying?

AILLIE
That you went into the woods?

KENNA
That *Bash* rescued you? What happened, what was he like --

MARY
He was there, but he didn't rescue me. And we hardly spoke, at least, once we were surrounded by the King's Guards, all the way back.
(unsettled by this)
I saw something awful while I was out there. Stirling found an arm, a human arm.

The servant seems to tense. Mary notices it as:

KENNA
In the woods?

GREER
They're full of desperate villagers and outlaws, Bash said so. Robbing and hacking each other --

AILLIE
(rooting for Francis)
All this talk of Bash. Didn't Francis go looking for you?

KENNA
Shouldn't he have?

MARY
No. It doesn't matter.

The girls trade looks, smelling trouble.

MARY (CONT'D)
I don't want to talk about Francis. He's... indifferent to me.

GREER
Mary. You've only just seen each other again. It's going to be fine.

MARY
I don't think so.

KENNA
It will. One way or another. Look at the King...

MARY
The King? What do you mean?

KENNA
He's married to the Queen, but they say he spends his <u>life</u> with Diane, his mistress. It's different for royals, once they wed, and you're a queen in your own right.

GREER
(but to Kenna, warning)
Is this really advice you want to be giving our Queen?

KENNA
(ignores Greer)
But it's true. Once you have heirs, no one would dare question you. If you don't love the man you marry, no one can stop you from bringing the man you <u>want</u> into your bed.

As this lands on Mary --

INT. CASTLE - MARY'S CHAMBERS - NIGHT

As Mary opens the door to her quarters, a cluster of ROCKS catches, skitters across the floor. She recognizes them. They're the agates she collected in the riverbed.

MARY
Hello?

Silence. Nothing seems disturbed, except the TALISMAN/DOLL she keeps near her bed, is gone. RUSTLING across the room.

MARY (CONT'D)
Who's here?

No answer, but someone *is* here. Mary sees a shadowed silhouette, an unclear shape, behind a dressing screen.

NEW ANGLE (NOT MARY'S POV) - REVEALS a fleeting glimpse of -- SOMEONE/CLARISSA. A distorted REFLECTION in a thick, leaded glass window: a misshapen, rough burlap sack covering a head, charcoal smudges for eyes, one of which has a slit cut out of it and through which a single, milky eye darts.

BACK ON MARY, oblivious to what lurks there, approaching the screen, reaching out a hand. From the opposite side of the screen another, delicate hand touches hers. Mary GASPS, but holds steady. Doesn't pull away.

MARY (CONT'D)
Who are you?

CLARISSA
(raspy whisper, warning)
Don't drink the wine.

Just then, a GUST OF WIND across the room -- a cup clatters to the ground. When Mary turns back, the SHROUDED FIGURE is gone. Mary steps behind the screen. Nobody there. But a door's been left ajar. A door Mary never noticed before. When she shuts it, she sees why. The door is cleverly concealed as part of the painted mural covering the wall.

Mary pulls it open, finds a drafty, dank passageway winding darkly into the bowels of the castle. *A secret corridor.* She quickly closes the door -- moves a piece of furniture in front of it. Then another.

EXT. CASTLE - NIGHT

FIREWORKS EXPLODE in the night sky, showering trails of glittering silver and gold over the palace in celebration.

INT. CASTLE - WEDDING HALL - NIGHT

A spectacular ballroom. MUSICIANS play. CAMERA SNAKES through the opulent, festive hall, PUSHING through a group of COURTIERS who've gathered to watch the BRIDE AND GROOM (Elisabeth and Philip) dance a stately version of La Volta. CAMERA PANS the onlookers, LANDING ON Lola, searching for Colin. When she spots him, he looks tense. Distracted as he scans the crowd, spots MARY across the room. He grabs a cup of wine from a passing tray and downs it.

On Lola again as Greer approaches her.

GREER
Why aren't you dancing with Colin?

LOLA
I wanted to...

ANGLE COLIN as he interrupts Mary's conversation with AILLIE and a couple ND COURTIERS, bows unsteadily and kisses Mary's coronation ring. She politely acknowledges him, promptly returns her attention to the others.

GREER
What's he doing with Mary?

REVERSE ANGLE - Lola watching.

LOLA
She's his queen. He's just paying his respects.

But there's a flicker of jealousy on her face.

BACK WITH MARY AND COLIN. He interrupts again, nervously hands her a cup of wine.

COLIN
Raise a glass to the happy couple.

Mary takes the wine, raises it to her lips, then stops --

MARY
(sotto, to herself)
Don't drink the wine.

She hesitates, wondering if she's being silly. But when Colin turns away, she sets the cup down on a nearby table. Almost simultaneously, a hand reaches for her waist -- Colin's pulling her onto the dance floor.

REVERSE ANGLE - Aillie reaches for the cup Mary set down. Mary moves to stop her, but Colin's leading her into a formation dance, and Aillie's already drunk the wine. As she dances, Mary keeps an eye on Aillie, who seems fine.

Mary's familiar with the choreography of the dance, but Colin's feeling the effects of the wine. He stumbles, raising eyebrows among the courtiers.

REVERSE ANGLE - Lola still watching, hurt. Now with both Greer and Kenna by her side. They're mortified for her.

LOLA
He's making a fool of himself. And of me.

Kenna thinks fast, moves toward the musicians.

ON MARY AND COLIN - Mary tries to steer him out of the dance, but he resists. Then, our MUSIC SHIFTS, as a CONTEMPORARY SOUNDTRACK SWELLS. THE FORMATION DANCE GIVES WAY TO A ROUSING CELTIC CIRCLE DANCE (similar to modern Ska-core dancing).

Greer and Kenna pull Lola onto the dance floor. Mary, Aillie and Colin join in. This dance is in their blood. They make a compelling, attractive sight.

IN ANOTHER CORNER - King Henry, Diane and Queen Catherine turn to watch as the young Scots take over the ball. Henry enjoys the spectacle a little too much, which irritates both Catherine and Diane.

CATHERINE
We are overrun by Scots.

NEW ANGLE - Bash watches Mary dance, drawn to her unbridled energy and passion. Somehow, Mary senses his gaze and finds him in the crowd. THEIR EYES LOCK, as the movement slows. For a moment, they're the only two people in the room, an unspoken bond forming between them. Just then, FEATHERS FALL LIKE SNOW FROM THE CEILING onto the guests in the hall.

ON MARY - turning her face upward, registering the feathers. And, as a plume brushes her cheek, she's thrown into a FLASHBACK:

INT. CASTLE - NURSERY - DAY - FLASHBACK

The sound of CHILDREN'S LAUGHTER. Excited shrieking. YOUNG MARY and YOUNG FRANCIS (both about 7) hold hands as they jump up and down on a bed topped with a feather mattress. With a LOUD RIP, the mattress tears open, sending DOWN FEATHERS FLYING INTO THE AIR. More laughter, shrieking and jumping.

FRANCIS
Mary, look! Feather-snow!

The children jump, grabbing at the floating feathers.

INT. CASTLE - WEDDING HALL - RESUME SCENE

Mary senses it now -- Francis eyes are also on her. The feathers seem to have registered a memory for him too. Natalia, at his side, forgotten, as his gaze locks on Mary's.

They begin walking toward each other, but before they connect, a slight commotion erupts in the hall as Elisabeth and Philip are ushered out and Lola, Greer, Kenna and Aillie descend on Mary, yanking her aside.

LOLA
(re: bride and groom)
Look. Elisabeth and Philip are leaving.

AILLIE
Where are they going?

The other girls exchange a knowing glance, then Kenna moves to follow the bride and groom out of the hall. The other girls follow into --

INT. CASTLE - CORRIDOR - NIGHT

They talk as they walk down the corridor.

KENNA
They're taking Philip and Elisabeth to the nuptial bed chamber.
(off Aillie's blank stare)
For the consummation of their marriage.

Aillie's shocked.

AILLIE
Now? Right now?

GREER
Yes, right now. The official witnesses have been called away from the ball as well.

AILLIE
So where are we going? We're not official witnesses.

Kenna leads them into --

INT. CASTLE - SMALL ANTE-CHAMBER - CONTINUOUS

A small room with what looks like a shuttered window set into an interior wall. Kenna puts her finger to her lips, *quiet.*

Kenna slides the window shutter open, revealing an ornately carved screen, much like a confessional screen -- through which, the girls can see directly into --

INT. CASTLE - NUPTIAL BED CHAMBER - NIGHT - SAME

The bed chamber is a sea of candles, the centerpiece of which is an ornate, canopied bed. SEVERAL LADY'S MAIDS scurry back and forth, removing Elisabeth's wedding gown, pulling a nightdress over her head, brushing her hair, rubbing perfumed oils on her skin. A BLACK-ROBED BISHOP, trailed by a YOUNG PRIEST, mumbles a Latin incantation, sprinkles holy water onto the bed. Three or four FRENCH & SPANISH OFFICIAL WITNESSES (all male, all noble) mill about. For such an intimate setting, there's a lot of activity in the room.

INTERCUTTING WITH - THE GIRLS - watching but unnoticed. In hushed voices:

LOLA
She's beautiful.

KENNA
Where's Philip?

MARY
I didn't realize it took so many people to consummate a marriage.

GREER
Only the important ones.

This registers, uncomfortably, with Mary.

BACK ON ELISABETH as a hush comes over the room when Philip and his STEWARD enter. Elisabeth's maids retreat to the back of the room, where they remain. Elisabeth curtseys, but looks forlorn as she stares at the bed. A child, suddenly terrified. Philip crosses to her, brushes a stray hair from her face. Takes in his beautiful bride.

PHILIP
I am the luckiest man in France.

Elisabeth smiles. Philip leans forward and they kiss. Gently at first, then harder. But Elisabeth resists, uncomfortable with the rather substantial audience still present in the room. Sensing this, Philip picks her up, carries her to the bed, positions himself over her.

PHILIP (CONT'D)
We are the only ones who matter here. You, me. You.

Softly, he kisses her neck as he pulls up her nightdress, slips a hand in. Elisabeth's eyes open. She gasps. Her hand grips the sheets...

ANGLE THE GIRLS -- all rapt, stunned by what they're seeing. This isn't what any of them expected. In addition to being shocked, Aillie looks uncomfortable and unwell/drowsy, though her friends are too distracted to notice.

AILLIE
Let's go.

But the other girls aren't about to leave. Aillie slips out, as the others watch PHILIP AND ELISABETH MAKE LOVE, Elisabeth now a full, *eager* participant, because he is good at this...

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. VARIOUS CASTLE CORRIDORS - NIGHT

Mary, Lola, Kenna and Greer tumble out into the corridor, drunk with newfound sexual knowledge.

MARY
(hushed)
Go, before anyone sees us.

QUICK POPS of each girl scurrying down a different corridor:

KENNA, flushed and smiling, passes a cluster of SPANISH COURTIERS who eye her lustily. She rounds a corner, stumbles into a deserted nook, steadies herself against a wall... then gives in to an impulse and runs a hand under her dress, touching herself. She enjoys it, doesn't stop.

LOLA approaches a MAN from behind, reaches out for him.

LOLA
Colin.

The MAN turns around. Not Colin. She curtseys quickly and moves on, continuing her search.

GREER angles down a corridor that opens into the kitchen. She spots the handsome servant, LEITH, going about his business, heads toward him.

BACK WITH KENNA - aroused to the point of no return when -- suddenly, a STRANGER approaches from behind, wraps his arms around her waist, presses his body into her as he kisses her neck. Kenna's surprised, but pleased, as she allows herself to melt into him --

INT. CASTLE KITCHEN - NIGHT

WITH GREER, aroused, angling toward Leith. He's measured. Gauging his response to her desire and recklessness.

LEITH
...You and your friends, you snuck into the consummation?

GREER
It was exciting.

LEITH
I see that.

GREER
You remind me of Philip. The groom.

LEITH
But I'm not, I'm not anyone. I'm a servant. You shouldn't be here. You girls think the rules of the castle, of court, of station, are a game?

Trying to bridge the gap; feeling different than the others:

GREER
I'm not highborn like my friends.

LEITH
Then you'll be the first to lose. Don't make me the cause of it.

Greer hesitates, moved, hurt, knowing he's right. And goes. But as she exits she steals a glance back, both wanting more.

INT. CASTLE CORRIDOR - SAME

BACK WITH KENNA AND THE STRANGER, as she turns to face him, only to discover she's in KING HENRY'S EMBRACE.

KENNA
Your Grace.

A split second of indecision for Kenna, before she gives in to the passion of the moment.

INT. CASTLE - WEDDING HALL - NIGHT

The feast is winding down. Mary sees Francis amongst other scattered wedding guests. Catches his eye purposefully. He crosses to her, something on his mind, too -- Natalia watching as they round a corner out of sight...

INT. CASTLE - PRIVATE ALCOVE - NIGHT

Facing off, both wanting to be heard, almost overlapping:

FRANCIS
I've been wanting to talk to you --

MARY
There's something I need to say to you.

FRANCIS
When you came to my room, I acted, I shouldn't have... There were other ways to handle this, without putting you in danger --

He struggles, feeling bad but not ready for full disclosure.

FRANCIS (CONT'D)
You should stay out of those woods.

MARY
(pissed)
You think I ran off because of you? I lost my dog.
(emotional but forceful)
And yes, you upset me, you were rude and cruel, and I don't understand why. We're supposed to get married someday, you *do* know that --

FRANCIS
Believe me, I know --

MARY
I don't expect you to love me on sight, I don't even know if I like you, but don't we owe it to each other, to our families, to our countries, to give it a chance?

FRANCIS
It's not that simple --

MARY
What's not that simple? We've been engaged since we were six, it's all planned, how awful do you have to find me to act this way --

He can't stand for Mary to think he doesn't like or want her. The damn bursts, his passion for his country pouring forth:

FRANCIS
(blurts)
It's not you, you're pretty and smart and... unpredictable, but that doesn't matter. What matters is what's right for my country. France isn't as strong as you think, or care, which maybe you don't, but I do. I'm going to be King someday, responsible for my people and right now, I think an alliance with Scotland against a formidable enemy will bleed my country dry.

MARY
(holy shit)
...You don't want to marry me. You don't want this at all --

FRANCIS
Things could change.
(spilling out options)
If England comes after us, we will need Scotland. If Italy stops funding the realm, we won't need Italy. I need to know these things before I make a decision.

MARY
The decision isn't yours, it's your father's --

FRANCIS
You don't see him pushing a wedding either, do you? All engagements really do is hold alliances. He's betting we might need Scotland, I'm betting we'll get more support elsewhere. I know that's not what you want to hear --

It's all crashing in on her now. Making terrible sense:

MARY
But you won't love me. You won't let yourself --

FRANCIS
I can't let myself, not right now. And I don't want to lead you on. All I'm asking you to do is wait. See how things go --

MARY
See how things go for France. I guess it is simple, after all...
(steely)
But you're not the only one with a country to think of.

Mary turns and storms off. Her eyes might be glassy with tears but her expression is fierce, determined.

INT. CASTLE - MARY'S BED CHAMBER - NIGHT

Mary's asleep in her bed, small and alone. Until -- we hear movement on the bed. WIDEN TO REVEAL - COLIN pulling back the covers, pulling up Mary's nightdress. He's on top of her, moving frantically, as fast as he can.

Mary jerks awake. Reflexively pushing him off. Colin seems shocked by her quick response, by the very fact that she awakened. Stares at her in horrified disbelief. In an instant, Mary's out of his grasp. Already calling for help.

MARY
No, no! Guard! Help me --

Colin moves to silence her, but it's too late. Doors thud open, GUARDS burst in, quickly secure Colin. As they drag him from her chamber:

COLIN
Please, Your Grace, please! It's not what you think.

Off Mary, shaken and confused --

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

INT. CASTLE CORRIDOR - DAY

Lola, Kenna, Greer and Aillie walk hurriedly down a winding corridor.

AILLIE
What are we supposed to say to her when we see her?

GREER
We comfort her.

KENNA
What if she's not a virgin?

GREER
She'll have to be examined. If she's not, then she'll never be Queen of France. And our lives, and chances, at court will be over.

AILLIE
Francis might want to marry her anyway.

GREER
Don't be daft. If Colin took her virtue, whether Mary wanted him to or not, she's done.

LOLA
Stop it! There must be some misunderstanding --

GREER
(to Kenna)
Or perhaps Mary understood your advice perfectly.
(then)
She is a queen, Lola. She takes what she wants, even from her friends.

LOLA
You think she *invited* him to her rooms?

KENNA
She could've just had too much wine. And then they got caught --

AILLIE
Are you saying Mary's lying? To protect herself?

GREER
(to Lola)
You must remain loyal to Mary, not Colin.

LOLA
I won't -- not if she's lying.

GREER
Then don't be surprised if she turns on you.

LOLA
Stop it, Greer.

Aillie hangs back with Lola, who's obviously distraught.

LOLA (CONT'D)
What if Mary did invite him to her chamber? How could he have refused?
(then)
I need to know.

KENNA
You can't ask Mary.

LOLA
I have to talk to Colin.

AILLIE
How? He's locked in a cell.

Off Lola, determined to find a way --

INT. CASTLE - DUNGEON CORRIDOR - DAY

Lola, wearing a hooded cloak that obscures her face, carries a torch to light her way as she navigates a dark, damp passageway that seems to wind deeper and deeper into the bowels of the castle. As she rounds a corner, she comes face-to-face with a large and imposing GUARD who protects a heavily fortified door.

Lola opens her hand, reveals a JEWELED BROOCH. The Guard pockets the brooch, opens the door to let her pass.

INT. CASTLE - DUNGEON CELL - DAY

A dank cell. Beaten, bloodied and terrified, Colin faces Lola with difficulty. Still, he wants her to know:

COLIN
...I love my family, my queen and my country. More than anything, I love you.

LOLA
Did Mary ask you to come to her chamber? Is that why you were there?

COLIN
Please don't ask questions.

LOLA
Tell me and I'll appeal to Mary's sense of justice.

COLIN
There are people, powerful people, whose eyes and ears are everywhere. They are the ones who forced me into these circumstances. The last thing they want is justice.

LOLA
What are you talking about?

COLIN
Leave me here. Forget me.

Lola's frustration gives way to tears.

LOLA
Colin, no. If you don't confide in me, they will execute you.

Colin looks at her lovingly, but determined. With sadness:

COLIN
I know.

INT. CASTLE - MARY'S QUARTERS - DAY

Lola appeals to Mary, clasping her hand.

LOLA
Please, my lady. My friend. You're the only one who can save Colin.

Mary's torn, filled with compassion for Lola, but still shaken and confused by her encounter with Colin.

MARY
Lola --

LOLA
They'll kill him for this -- they'll kill him before the day is out.

MARY
He attacked me --

LOLA
He swears his loyalty to you and to Scotland. And he swears his love for me.

MARY
You spoke to him --

LOLA
I had to. But he won't tell me the truth of what happened.
(then)
Will you? Did you ask him to come to you?

Shocked, Mary distances herself from Lola. For the first time, we see Mary own every inch of her title. She is regal and her indignation is righteous.

MARY
You're defending the man who committed an assault against your Queen. Lola --

LOLA
(cowed)
Forgive me, Your Grace. I'm only trying to make sense of why he's so afraid.

MARY
He was caught and now he's afraid to die.

LOLA
It's more than that. I think he's been threatened in some way.
(off Mary)
(MORE)

LOLA (CONT'D)
I know it doesn't make sense, but I believe he was forced into committing this crime.
(pressing on)
Why else would he do this? How could he hope to get away with it?

Lola has a point. In QUICK POPS Mary recalls:

FLASH: Colin's stunned expression when he sees Mary is awake.

FLASH: The silhouetted figure behind the screen.

CLARISSA
(urgently; a warning)
Don't drink the wine.

FLASH: MARY'S POV of Aillie drinking from Mary's wine cup at the wedding. A theory forming in her mind...

MARY
Someone warned me...

LOLA
Warned you about what?

Mary blows past her question, responds with one of her own.

MARY
How was Aillie last night?

LOLA
Drunk. Her maids had to carry her to bed.

MARY
What about today?

LOLA
Groggy, but fine. What difference does it make?

MARY
How *did* he hope to get away with it unless... He didn't think I'd wake.
(means)
Someone else knew of his plan... and if it was a *plan*, others might be involved. I have to talk to him.

LOLA
You can only do that if he's alive.

MARY
I have to delay Colin's execution.
(a plan taking shape)
Is there talk? Do others believe I invited Colin to my chamber?
(off Lola, softening)
Tell me the truth, Lola.

LOLA
Yes, my lady. Some do.

Off Mary, eyes blazing --

INT. CASTLE - KING HENRY'S QUARTERS - DAY

CLOSE ON MARY as she makes a deliberate, and entirely false, confession.

MARY
... The truth is, I drank too much wine last night and I -- *invited* Colin to my room.

WIDEN TO REVEAL - her shocked listeners, King Henry and Queen Catherine.

CATHERINE
What is this nonsense, child?

MARY
(undeterred)
Nothing happened, and I'll submit to any examination Your Majesty deems necessary to prove it.
(then)
Things moved quickly and I -- overreacted. But Colin doesn't deserve to be executed.

Henry stands up.

HENRY
Enough. Your loyalty, whether it's to your lady-in-waiting or your countryman, is admirable. However, it's also misplaced.

MARY
What do you mean?

CATHERINE
Witnesses have come forward.

HENRY
Colin MacPhail was part of an English plot to ruin your reputation. To undo your engagement to Francis and destroy the alliance between Scotland and France.

CATHERINE
The boy is guilty of treason.

Mary's thrown by this, but stands her ground, formidable.

MARY
All the more cause for me to hear from him.
(off Henry)
I am not a French subject, and I am not a pawn. I am the Queen of Scotland. If my person is in danger, I will assess the threat, and the crime.

A glint of respect from Henry.

HENRY
Scotland is fortunate to have such a fierce ruler.

Catherine disapproves, interjects.

CATHERINE
It's a waste of time.

HENRY
It's settled. The Scotsman will be heard. Tomorrow. By everyone in this room, as well as my privy council.

Off Catherine, unhappy --

INT. CASTLE - DUNGEON CELLS - DAY

Dimly lit even during the day. Colin and two other PRISONERS share the dank, putrid cell. The other prisoners huddle conspiratorially together, then approach a terrified Colin.

PRISONER #1
How would you like to breathe fresh air and feel the sun on your skin?
(off Colin)
All you have to do is help us disarm the Guard when he comes.

COLIN
I can't --

PRISONER #2
It's just one guard. We've bribed the rest and there's someone meeting us with horses in the woods.

Colin's frightened. He's in way over his head.

PRISONER #1
You have two choices, boy. Stay here and die or come with us and live.

Just then, the clang of a key in the lock.

PRISONER #1 (CONT'D)
Will you come?

Terrified, Colin nods. What happens next happens fast.

The GUARD enters, heads straight for Prisoner #1, PLUNGES A DAGGER INTO HIS CHEST. This was a set-up. Prisoner #2 grabs Colin. They run --

INT. CASTLE - DUNGEON CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

As soon as they round a corner, and in one swift motion, Prisoner #2 SNAPS COLIN'S NECK, walks calmly away. He's joined by the GUARD who stabbed Prisoner #1.

Off Colin, slumped on the cold ground, dead eyes staring up --

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

INT. CASTLE - LOLA'S CHAMBERS - NIGHT

Lola's eyes are red-rimmed with grief. She's drained, numb. Mary is subdued and compassionate.

LOLA
He wasn't a traitor. He wasn't a rapist.

MARY
I know he loved you, and I believe he was coerced.

LOLA
By whom?

MARY
I don't know. King Henry believes it was an English plot. But it could be anyone -- anyone who objects to my marriage to Francis.

LOLA
Your enemies are everywhere.

It's a simple, terrifying truth, and it settles on them both.

MARY
I am so sorry, Lola.

Mary moves to comfort, but Lola pulls away.

LOLA
You're the reason he's dead. Anyone who's close to you lives in constant danger. We're disposable. Kenna, Greer, Aillie, me -- all of us.

MARY
No, you're not. I need you. You're my friends.

LOLA
Kenna's my friend. Greer and Aillie are my friends. You are my Queen and I am your *subject*. I'm here in service to you, whatever that means. Whatever it costs me.

Mary feels the weight of a seemingly unbearable responsibility on her shoulders, and realizes this burden is hers alone to bear.

MARY
I'll protect you.

LOLA
You can't even protect yourself.

MARY
I'll do better, Lola. I promise.

INT. CASTLE - THE GREAT HALL - NIGHT

On Francis, as he faces off with Mary, trying to understand:

FRANCIS
...Did you invite this boy to your room? My father thinks you were lying, that you were trying to protect one of your countrymen --

MARY
(feels awful and angry)
I didn't protect him, did I? He's dead. Why do you care *how* he came to my room?

FRANCIS
How do you think this makes you look?

MARY
Or how it makes you look. Because we're engaged. But you have no intention of marrying me. What if I told everyone that? Then this would be over --

FRANCIS
You wouldn't do that, because it's not true. I might marry you --

MARY
(hates these words)
Someday. Maybe. If.

FRANCIS
You said you had a country to think about. Were you thinking about Scotland during any of this?

MARY
(impassioned, constrained)
I was thinking, for a minute, about myself, my friends, my safety --

He feels for her. Facing the same obligations he does.

FRANCIS
You could have ruined your reputation. Forcing the issue so that I couldn't marry you, even if things go the way we want them to --

Stops himself. He hadn't wanted to lead her on and this does.

MARY
Did you say we? ...So, *we* would want to be married?
(he looks caught)
Don't worry. You're not leading me on. I know how you feel...

And she does. He's into her. There are obstacles, but she has hope. For them, for Scotland, for more. As he walks away, pissed at himself, Mary adds, almost to herself --

MARY (CONT'D)
I know how you feel.

INT. CASTLE CORRIDOR - NIGHT

A determined Francis blows down the corridor, stopping before a door. He hesitates only a moment before pushing into --

INT. NATALIA'S QUARTERS - CONTINUOUS

Natalia's surprised to see him. She nods to her LADIES, who scurry out of the room.

NATALIA
What are you doing here?

Francis heads straight for Natalia, leads her into --

INT. NATALIA'S QUARTERS - BED CHAMBER - CONTINUOUS

-- where he stops short at the bed. Faces her.

FRANCIS
If we do this, you have to be willing to marry someone else. *Especially* if we do this and you're with child...

She goes into his arms, a whisper in his ear:

NATALIA
I'll do whatever you ask. But I'll always belong to you.

Off the young couple, giving in to their passion --

INT. CASTLE - BOWELS - NIGHT

Catherine lights into Nostradamus. She's furious.

CATHERINE
You said the potion would make her sleep like the dead. If it had, she'd have failed the examination and the engagement to Francis would've been broken.

NOSTRADAMUS
There was nothing wrong with my potion. It was the delivery of it that failed.

CATHERINE
That stupid boy.

NOSTRADAMUS
Stupid, dead boy. Throwing away his life to protect his family. From you.

CATHERINE
I'll do anything for my family, for my son. As to the Scot's death, Henry gave me no choice. The boy would've implicated me. And you.

NOSTRADAMUS
Henry suspects nothing?

Catherine shakes her head, no.

NOSTRADAMUS (CONT'D)
And yet, the Queen of Scotland is still a virgin and her betrothal to Francis still stands.

The reality of this gnaws at Catherine.

CATHERINE
Have your visions altered?

NOSTRADAMUS
They remain constant. She will bring his death.

CATHERINE
Then I cannot relent.

NOSTRADAMUS
Not if you truly wish to save your son, and yourself.
(then)
You must be willing to sacrifice.

EXT. CASTLE COURTYARD - DAY

The final send-off for ELISABETH as she sets off for Spain with PHILIP, her new husband. Two carriages at the front of the procession -- one for Philip and his STEWARD, the one behind it for Elisabeth and her LADIES. Several carts laden with chests containing clothes, provisions, Elisabeth's dowry, etc... lined up behind. The YOUNG VALOIS SIBLINGS, including HANK, run up and down the procession. Hank's wielding one of the swords we recall from Francis' workshop.

NEW ANGLE - HENRY plants a perfunctory farewell kiss on Elisabeth's forehead.

HENRY
God be with you, child. Remember your duties to France.

He looks to Philip, pats his shoulder --

HENRY (CONT'D)
As well as your duties to Spain.

ELISABETH
Yes, father.

Henry's restless, his eyes roam the crowd. DIANE notices, knowingly follows his gaze as it lands --

ON KENNA who demurely averts her eyes, but smiles in spite of herself.

NEW ANGLE - LEITH, and other KITCHEN SERVANTS, pack provisions onto one of the carts. He sees GREER looking his way, but studiously ignores her as he goes about his work.

ON LOLA, pale and listless as she stands with AILLIE watching Elisabeth embrace CATHERINE.

LOLA
(to Aillie, re: Elisabeth)
Look how happy she is. She's in love, and her life is just beginning...

Her voice trails off as her eyes well with tears and Aillie puts a comforting arm around her.

REVERSE ANGLE - MARY overhears Lola. She moves toward her, but stops when she sees FRANCIS with NATALIA and catches a fleeting touch between the two of them.

ON CATHERINE - pleased, as she clocks Mary seeing Francis with Natalia. She can't help it, feels jealous, irritated.

NEW ANGLE - BASH also clocks Mary's jealousy. He crosses to her. She smiles at his approach.

BASH
Seems we were just here. Welcoming you to court.

MARY
Does it? To me, it feels like a lifetime ago.

REVERSE ANGLE - FRANCIS watches Mary and Bash, wondering what they're talking about.

The clatter of hooves and wheels on stone as the procession lurches into motion and the CAMERA CRANES UP watching it snake away from the palace out onto the road that hugs the treeline of the woods beyond the palace walls as --

DAY DISSOLVES INTO NIGHT, AND THE RUMBLE OF THE PROCESSION FADES TO AN ECHO --

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

FOLLOW A DARK FIGURE/N.D. HENCHMAN, dragging a heavy load -- a body -- deep into the forest. Through dense tree coverage, in snippets, we see:

A rope swung over a tree limb. The corpse hoisted, feet first, just high enough off the ground to allow gravity to do its work. The flash of steel as a dagger slits the dead throat. Blood draining into a sacrificial bowl. The bough creaks, and the rope twists to REVEAL - COLIN'S DEAD BODY, swaying in the moonlight.

ANGLE DOWN TO - the sacrificial bowl, now brimming with blood.

WIDEN TO REVEAL a hooded, CLOAKED FIGURE (distinct from and more refined than the N.D. Henchman) emerging from the trees, slinking toward the bowl, carefully picking it up. The figure moves off with the bowl, deeper into the woods -- toward some unseen destination.

EXT. CASTLE WALL - NIGHT

Alone, Mary stands on a stone parapet that provides a BIRD'S EYE VIEW of the castle grounds, framed by the deep dark woods in the distance. A light snow falls.

SHIFT POV - SOMEONE STANDING BEHIND MARY, watching her.

ANGLE DOWN TO - edges of a tattered, dirty gown. Delicate, ashen grey, bare feet standing in the snow.

BACK ON MARY - she senses a presence but does not turn or confront. Softly, calmly, she speaks to the watcher:

MARY
I don't know who you are or why you hide, but your warning saved me. Danger surrounds me here, and I am in your debt.

WIDEN TO REVEAL both figures, silhouetted in shadow - Clarissa behind Mary, a burlap hood obscuring her head.

MARY (CONT'D)
Are you in danger, too?

BACK ON MARY - as she pauses, hoping her words have put her listener at ease. She turns -- but CLARISSA IS GONE.

INT. CASTLE - MARY'S BED CHAMBER - NIGHT

Mary's MAIDS undress her, take her hair down, etc... Her gaze is drawn to the bedside table where she clocks -- the STICK DOLL. It's been returned, but altered. The doll's head has been wrapped in a dull, rough yarn <u>resembling a worn burlap sack</u>, with two dark smudges for eyes. She moves to the table, picks it up.

Off Mary, examining the doll, wondering what it all means --

FADE OUT.

<u>END OF PILOT</u>