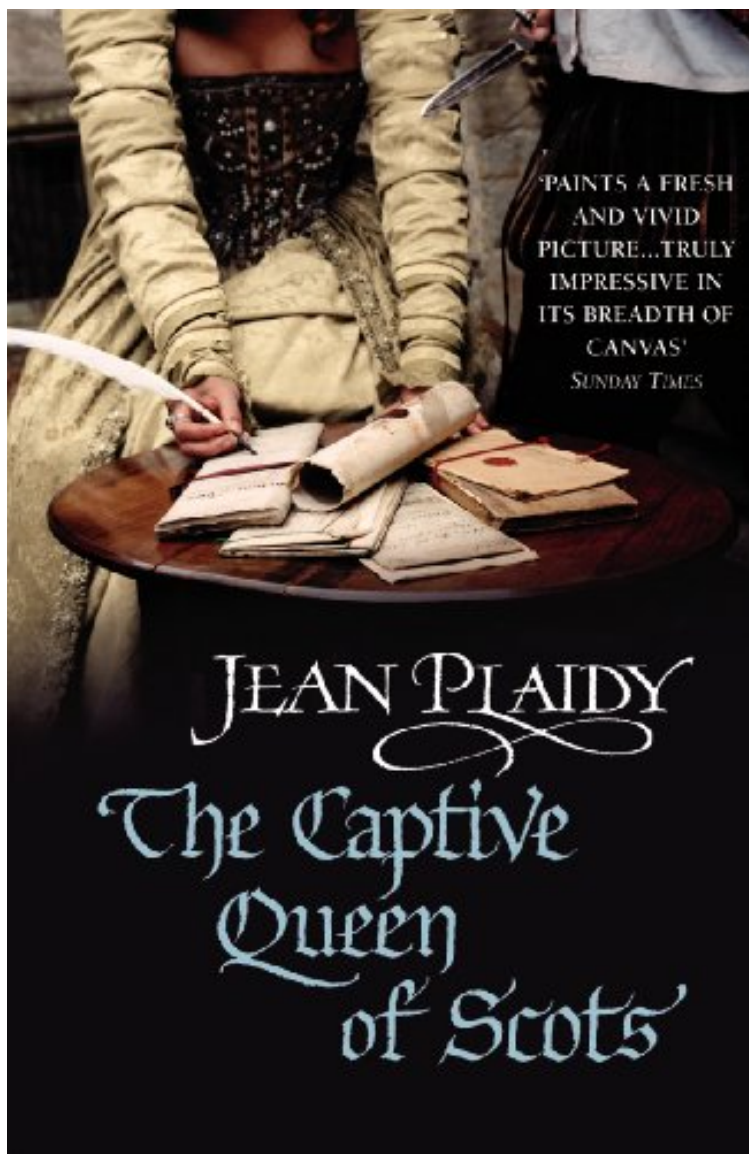


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# The Captive Queen of Scots: (Mary Stuart)



*Par Jean Plaidy*  
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## Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurThe concluding novel in Jean Plaidy's Tudor/Stuart series, where two powerful cousins finally end their battle for England's crown.Scotland has been torn apart by civil war and the young and passionate Catholic Mary Queen of Scots is in the hands of her enemies. Under duress, Mary abdicates in favour of her son, James VI, and fleeing to England she boldly seeks refuge from her cousin, Queen Elizabeth I. But Elizabeth has never trusted the ambitious Mary, and consequently has her imprisoned.So begins a treacherous battle between two of history's most powerful and ruthless women. Without once meeting her cousin, Mary is held captive for nineteen years, whilst Elizabeth rules in the shadow of countless Catholic plots against her life...ExtraitLochlevenIn the castle of Lochleven which was built on an

island in the middle of the loch an exciting expectancy prevailed. All through the day, the serving men and maids had been aware that they must prepare for an important visitor, and rumor had seeped through to them that this was none other than the captive Queen. Ears were strained for the sounds of arrival; eyes continually turned to the strip of water which separated the island from the mainland on which could be seen the roofs of the houses of Kinross. She would embark there and the boat was ready, waiting for her. The castellan of the castle, Sir William Douglas, was uneasy; he did not relish the responsibility which had been given him; he foresaw trouble. Yet it was a commission which he dared not refuse; he should, he supposed, have been grateful because his half-brother, James Stuart, Earl of Moray, would wish him to be the Queen's jailor. Yet he knew that a tense and stormy period lay before him. Wherever Mary Stuart was, there was trouble; it was hardly likely that Lochleven would escape it. Now he was waiting for her arrival which surely could not long be delayed; and he decided that once more he must impress upon his mother the importance of the task which had been given them; and for this reason he made his way to her apartments. He found her seated at a window; like most people in the castle she was gazing out across the lake, and with her was William's younger brother George. Margaret Douglas looked eagerly at her elder son as he entered. He noticed with a twinge of jealousy that she looked younger than she had before they had received the news. He knew the reason; it was because, by keeping the Queen a prisoner at Lochleven, she would be serving Moray. Why had he felt the need to warn her of the importance of this duty when all that she did for Moray she would do well? "Is there news?" she asked, and the animation on her beautiful, though aging face, was startling. William shook his head. "I trust all will be well. Jamie will expect us to do our duty." "We shall do it, have no fear of that," William replied. He might have reminded her that Moray--now that the Queen was a captive--was the most influential man in Scotland, that before long he would be the ruler of Scotland, which was what he had always intended to be. If one hoped to live in peace in Scotland, one must obey Moray; he, William Douglas, castellan of Lochleven since the death of his father, Sir Robert Douglas, would have been prepared to do that even if Moray had not been his half-brother, and his mother's bastard. "Jamie will expect us to do this duty well," went on Margaret Douglas complacently. Young George clenched his hands in disgust; he was eighteen, romantic, and chivalrous and could not bear to contemplate his mother's dishonor. As for Margaret she was unaware of any dishonor, for in her opinion there was nothing but honor in bearing the bastard of a King. Often she delighted in Jamie's resemblance to his father. She had not been the only woman to catch the roving eye of James V of Scotland and to offer the world living proof of what had passed between them. To her he had been faithful for a while and she would never forget that. She had been jealous of the others. How she had hated Euphemia Elphinstone when he had borne the King her son Robert; not that Robert was the only one. James was a King who could be gay and melancholy, and when he was gay he was very gay; there had been numerous known bastards, and even James did not know how many unknown ones. Yet, she thought wistfully, all the Stuart charm was his and to have known it was to have drunk deep of pleasure. There were no regrets. And when she looked at her Jamie--James Stuart who had been Earl of Mar and was now Earl of Moray--how could she refrain from thinking what a cruel fate it was that had made him the bastard, and that giddy girl, Mary Stuart, the King's only legitimate heir? Jamie resented it--oh how bitterly. But perhaps now the bitterness was less acute. She smiled. It was ironical that Mary should now be in the hands of one who had been her father's mistress and who would do everything in her power to further the aims of her own son. It was rough justice of a sort. Sometimes she believed that her clever fox of a Jamie had all along intended that something like this should happen. "And the silly giddy girl deserves her fate," she said aloud. "Something like this was bound to happen sooner or later." "She is a brave woman. She was not afraid to venture onto the battlefield with her army at Carberry Hill." That was young George, and as he spoke his face flushed. He wondered why he had spoken; he should have known better and kept his thoughts to himself. He did not share the opinions of the others. The Queen was a beautiful woman in distress. His half-brother, the bastard, who should surely shame his mother every time she thought of him, was a ruthless man. George knew whose side he himself was on. But it was foolish of course to say so before his brother and mother. Fortunately they did not appear to have heard him. I am too young for my opinions to be of any importance to them, thought George resentfully. His mother was speaking to his brother William. "I hope you have increased the guard about the castle." "Naturally," replied Sir William. "Is it wise to keep her on the ground floor? Escape would be easier from there." "She will be well guarded there for the time being. Perhaps later I shall make other plans." Sir William was suddenly alert. He had thought he had seen movement on the mainland. But it was not that band of riders who were escorting the captured Queen. Margaret said: "She will not be here for some time. They would not set out from Holyrood until

nightfall. It would be too dangerous. The mob would tear her into pieces. "William did not answer, but George could not restrain himself. "Might that not be what they wish?" "No, no, Geordie," said his mother soothingly. "You are too vehement. The last thing Jamie wishes is for any harm to befall his half-sister. Don't forget that she is his own flesh and blood." "Bearing a similar relationship as that between him and myself," murmured George with a hint of cynicism in his voice which was lost on his mother. If she could only know, thought George, how I hate these casual relationships which can bring about such havoc in families. "Perhaps," William put in, "we should go to sup. It is foolish to wait, when she may not be here until morning." "Then let us go," said Margaret. In the dining hall the company had eagerly been awaiting the appearance of the castellan and his mother and, as they came in, the tension relaxed. The daughters of the family, who were seated near the dais, whispered together that this could only mean that the Queen was not expected that night. As Sir William took his place on the dais with his mother, there came to stand behind his chair a boy of about fourteen who was wearing a jerkin which had once belonged to George. He was a bold-eyed boy, with hair of a carrot tinge, and a freckled face; and the position he held in the household was unique, because he was not quite a servant nor yet a member of the family. George could not remember exactly when this boy had come to the castle; he had heard it said that as a baby the boy was left at the castle gates, and that one of the servants had found him there, but George had never received confirmation of this, as his elders were evasive on the matter. He was cheeky, that boy, sensing his specially privileged position; one of his duties was to wait on Sir William at table. No one asked questions as to who he was and why he should be different from the rest of the servants. Perhaps it was because there was a look of a Douglas about him; he was in fact always known as Willie Douglas. George had had an affection for the boy which dated from the day when he was about ten and Willie six. That was before George had discovered how much he hated the casual relationships of grown-up people which led to unorthodox results. He suspected now that Willie was the result of one of his brother William's indiscretions; but that could not change his affection for the boy once it had been firmly founded. As he seated himself at table Willie whispered to him: "Great days in store for Lochleven, eh, Geordie?" And he gave George a wink that made his pert, freckled face slightly more comical than it had been before, so that George could not help smiling. The meal progressed; and when the night had fallen there came with it a return of that brooding tension. Dismounting, Mary could scarcely stand. The noise of those raucous voices was still echoing in her ears. Lord Lindsay, who was at her side, said in a tone which had an edge of roughness in it and was devoid of the respect due to a Queen: "The boat is waiting." "Boat! Then where are you taking me?" "You will know in time." "How dared they! She turned to Lindsay, and goaded out of her exhaustion, cried: "I'll have your head for this, my lord." Lindsay did not reply. Lord Ruthven who had come to stand beside her said gently: "It is only a short distance across the lake, Your Majesty." Mary turned to him eagerly for she fancied she heard a note of compassion in his voice. So desperately alone did she feel that any sign of friendship lifted her spirits. Ruthven did not meet her eye; he was ashamed of his mission. She thought: He is so young. He is not yet grown cruel like so many of my Scottish lords. "Thank you, my lord," she said. Young Ruthven looked uncomfortable, fearing, Mary suspected, that Lindsay would have heard his remark and accuse him of softness toward their victim. It was young Ruthven who helped her into the boat, where she sat listening to the rhythmic suck of the water as the oars displaced it. "My lord Ruthven," she whispered at length, "where are they taking me?" "To Lochleven, Your Majesty." "Lochleven! To the Douglases! Ah, I see. To Sir William--the half-brother of my half-brother, Moray. He will doubtless make a good jailor. And conducted there by Lindsay--his brother-in-law." "Your Majesty . . ." The young man did not continue; he was turning his face away that she might not see his emotion. She said softly: "Do not be ashamed, my lord Ruthven, to show pity for a poor woman who is surrounded by her enemies. She will not forget that you alone showed her compassion on this fearful night." Ruthven did not answer, perhaps because Lindsay, hearing the murmur of voices, had edged nearer to them. There was silence now, broken only by the dipping of the oars. Mary, dazed and exhausted, felt the years slipping away from her; the only way in which she could endure the present was to return to the past. Once before, long long ago, she had been in flight from her enemies; and then, as now, she had sat in a boat and been rowed to an island in a lake. "Inchmahome!" she whispered; and found comfort in the name. Inchmahome . . . where she had lived for a short period of her childhood when it had been necessary to find a refuge from her enemies; and how pleasantly she had lived in that monastic community. Inchmahome . . . Lochleven. Oh, but there was a difference. Then her enemies had been the English, who had crossed the Border and inflicted defeats on the Scots, culminating in the disaster of Pinkie Cleugh. How much more tragic when there was strife among Scotsmen; when she was a prisoner of her own subjects!" Inchmahome. . .

. ." she whispered. "If I could but go once more to Inchmahome!"The monks she had known would be long since dead. But there would be others, gentle monks, who tended their gardens, who worked together in peace, away from the world of intrigue and ambition.Ruthven whispered: "We are there, Your Majesty."She saw the dark shapes of people, and in the light of torches the gray shape of the castle loomed up before her. A fortress! she thought; my prison.Sir William had come forward. He was bowing over her hand. So there were some who remembered that she was their Queen."I and my household will do our best to make Your Majesty's stay at Lochleven comfortable," he told her.And there was she who had been Margaret Erskine, who was now Margaret Douglas--the beauty who had been her father's mistress and was her brother James's mother.Margaret curtsied."Welcome to Lochleven, Your Majesty."Mary answered: "I am so tired. Take me to my bed." "Your Majesty would like to rest before taking a little food?" "The thought of food sickens me. I want only to rest." "Then come this way."So Mary entered the castle of Lochleven, knowing that she entered a prison. But she was too weary to care. There was only one thing she craved now. Rest. Quiet, that she might shut out the memory of those cruel faces which had leered at her, that she could for a while forget the words which had been shouted at her. Oblivion. That was what at this moment she needed more than anything in the world. She was aware of faces as she passed on her way through the quadrangle to the southeast tower. They looked almost ghostly in the lights of the cressets on the castle walls. There was one which held her attention for a few seconds; it was the face of a young man with a gentle mouth and eyes which betrayed his sympathy as he looked at her. Perhaps she half smiled at him; she was not sure. But the face did have the power--exhausted as she was--to hold her attention for that short moment. There was one other, she noticed--a young boy with a mischievous expression; his alert eyes were fixed on her and she could not read what thoughts were going on behind them.Revue de presse"Her novels are still very much to be enjoyed ... Any writer who can both educate and thrill a reader of any age deserves to be remembered and find new fans ... One only has to look at the TV/Media to see that the appetite for this kind of writing is still very much there" (Matt Bates WH Smith Travel)"Jean Plaidy doesn't just write the history, she makes it come alive." (Julia Moffat, RNA)"Paints a fresh and vivid picture...truly impressive in its breadth of canvas" (Sunday Times)"These books are page-turners; they offer a wonderful way to learn about history, their heroines are smart, strong and in control of their destinies and their stories will remain with you for ever...They are a celebration of women's spirit throughout history." (Daily Express)"Full-blooded, dramatic, exciting" (Observer)