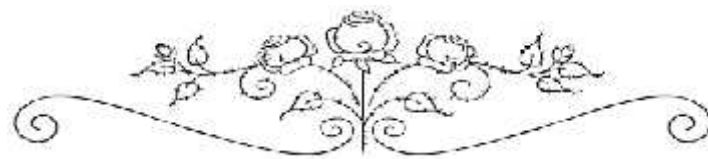


# The Lady in Waiting



A full-length history play

by

Karina Young

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## THE LADY IN WAITING

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## THE LADY IN WAITING

“The Lady in Waiting” was first performed from the 19th-28th of May, 2022 by Macquarie University Drama Society (DRAMAC), in Sydney, Australia.

Karina Young is the writer of several short plays performed by theatre groups in Australia. She has a Bachelor in Speech, Hearing and Language Sciences and a diploma of Library and Information Studies. This is her first full-length play.

### Characters

#### **James III**

*The cruel father of James IV and a weak monarch.*

#### **Lord Home**

*The Lord Chamberlain and advisor to Scotland’s Kings, Home is a man whose loyalties can never quite be trusted.*

#### **The Cailleach**

*An enchantress present at the birth of Katherine and James IV. She foretells the prophecy of the thistle and the rose.*

#### **Katherine Gordon**

*Cousin to James IV, Lady Katherine is a ruthless and calculating woman who will stop at nothing on her quest for power.*

#### **James IV**

*Scotland’s young and intelligent ruler, who is often led astray by his heart and his advisors.*

#### **Eleanor Gordon**

*Lady Katherine’s jealous younger sister.*

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### **Sir Gerald**

*Sir Gerald Fitzgerald is the son of the Earl of Kildare and the object of Lady Eleanor's eye.*

### **The Pretender**

*A young merchant's assistant who claims to be the heir to the throne of England.*

### **The Merchant**

*A wise seafarer and employer of the Pretender.*

### **Henry VII**

*A ruler of wits and planning, who has been made a cautious and secretive King by the Yorkist attempts to unseat him.*

### **Elizabeth of York**

*The kind and gentle queen of England, but fierce protector of her family.*

### **Ensemble**

Father Grenfell

Prince Arthur Performers

Guards

Margaret of Burgundy

Lambert Simnel

## THE LADY IN WAITING

### Scene 1

*In the dead of the night, screams of labour rip through Stirling Castle. King James III paces anxiously in his throne room. There is a knock on the door, and Lord Home enters.*

**James III:** How is she?

**Lord Home:** She's fighting well but - it's been going for too long.

**James III:** What can be taking so long? Lord Gordon's child was born hours ago.

**Lord Home:** The cailleach believes----

**James III:** That enchantress has been allowed in my castle?!

**Lord Home:** I apologise, your majesty, the midwives called for her--

**James III:** I'll not have that hag--

**Lord Home:** And you ordered that they be given every leave.

**James III:** By which I did not mean--

**Lord Home:** Your majesty, please, it was the only option. The midwives say the child is upside down.

**James III:** No.

**Lord Home:** They cannot get it out while your wife is...

**James III:** Is what?

**Lord Home:** Still alive. Your majesty, they cannot both be saved. Unless...

**James III:** Very well. The cailleach may remain. But...let it be known that my priority is the child. I must have an heir.

**Lord Home:** Of course, sire.

*More screams. Lord Home crosses himself.*

**James III:** This is a foul night of ill-omens and screams.

**Lord Home:** It is a most auspicious night.

*James III looks at Lord Home reproachfully.*

**Lord Home:** The...the cailleach is saying, that it is most auspicious. Two babes born in the castle on the same night. And under a sky of falling stars...

**James III:** And what meaning does she give that?

**Lord Home:** That the babes are cursed. My liege, I suggest that...it might not be unwise if we were to...

**James III:** Out with it.

**Lord Home:** Have the cailleach do a reading.

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**James III:** Lord Home, It is bad enough she is in the castle, I'll not have performing her magicks within these walls.

*Lord Home nods.*

**James III:** Now return to the chamber and bring me further news. And Lord Home, no more speak of magick.

**Lord Home:** Aye, your majesty.

*King James resumes his nervous pacing. The screams grow louder, and then suddenly, they stop. The door opens and the King looks up expectantly, but it is the old cailleach who enters.*

**James III:** What are you doing here? Where is my child?

**Cailleach:** Safely in your wife's arms.

*The King breathes a sigh of relief.*

**James III:** Thank you.

**Cailleach:** Do not thank me, foolish king. I have defied the powers of the divine world at your bidding and so you must pay.

**James III:** Pay what?

*The Cailleach reaches into the bucket and holds the bloody placenta in her hands.*

*King James recoils in disgust.*

**Cailleach:** It's all written here. In the blood and flesh of your wife and babe.

**James III:** I won't hear any of your nonsense. You have done your job, now be grateful that you may leave with your life.

*The Cailleach thrusts the placenta at the king. And traces her finger across it as she reads.*

**Cailleach:** Look! You see! Thine end shalt be wrought by thy next of kin. For only they might end the feud of the thistle and the rose.

*There is a moment as James III looks from the bucket to the Cailleach and then:*

**James III:** Get--Get away from me, you hag. Guards! Get out! Get out!

*The guards and Lord Home run in but before they reach the Cailleach, she flees with the bucket in hand.*

**Cailleach:** Bidh an nighean agad a' gabhail do bheatha ach cha bhi a' crùn aice!

**James III:** Get her out of the castle! Throw her out at once!

**Lord Home:** What happened your majesty? What did she say?

**James III:** She - ah - nothing, nothing. It's all nonsense.

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**Lord Home:** Are you all right your majesty? You're shaking.

**James III:** I - yes. I'm fine.

**Lord Home:** Would you like to see the baby?

**James III:** No! I mean - not just yet, I think I...I think...

*The king trails off and walks over to the window. There is an uncomfortable pause as Lord Home stands, uncertain whether to leave. Finally, he makes a move towards the door, but the king calls out to him.*

**James III:** Lord Home.

**Lord Home:** Yes, your majesty?

**James III:** I wonder...do you truly believe in prophecy?

**Lord Home:** Why, I'd say it depends entirely on the prophet, your majesty. There are those who beg a silver coin to read the lines on your palm. They are nothing but charlatans. But I've never met a man who failed to heed the words of the cailleach and not regret it.

*King James nods slowly.*

**Lord Home:** I take it the prophecy concerned the newborn?

**James III:** Aye. *Thine end shalt be wrought by thy next of kin. For only they might end the feud of the thistle and the rose.*

**Lord Home:** Then the child was born to kill you?

**James III:** So it would seem. Who knows of the births?

**Lord Home:** Only those present. It has not yet been announced.

**James III:** Good. Then it must stay that way until...

**Lord Home:** Until what?

**James III:** What was it?

**Lord Home:** I'm sorry, your majesty?

**James III:** The child. What was it? Do I have a son or a daughter?

*Lord Home hesitates for a moment before answering.*

**Lord Home:** A - son, your majesty. You have a son.

*The King nods sadly, resigned to his fate.*

**James III:** Bring him to me.

**Lord Home:** Certainly, your majesty. What will you call the boy?

**James III:** James. Prince James.

*Lights down.*

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### Scene 2

*James IV and Lady Katherine Gordon run into the room, giggling.*

**Katherine:** Are you sure no one will find us here?

**James IV:** Aye, quite sure. No one wants to be in here with my ugly father staring down at them.

*The pair look up at the portrait of King James III.*

**Katherine:** Och, can't imagine why.

**James IV:** It's definitely the haircut. He still wears it the same way his mother cut it when he first ascended the throne.

**Katherine:** When he was nine?

**James IV:** Aye.

**Katherine:** It's not the hair that does it. It's the eyes. They point in different directions, like a great toad.

**James IV:** You should see them in real life. They go all over the place. It's terrifying, you can never tell if he's watching you or not.

**Katherine:** I feel rather the same about the portrait.

*James IV shrugs and pulls Katherine towards him.*

**James IV:** Doesn't bother me.

**Katherine:** Nor me.

*They kiss, but before they get far, the lovers are interrupted by the sound of approaching footsteps.*

**James IV:** Quick, hide!

*He shoves Katherine behind a curtain and is still trying to look presentable when his father, King James III enters the room.*

**James IV:** Father? I didn't know you were at Stirling.

**James III:** I arrived this morning.

**James IV:** I was not told.

**James III:** I came to speak with you.

**James IV:** With me?

**James III:** Aye. It is time we discussed your marriage.

**James IV:** My marriage, but surely -



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**James III:** You will marry Princess Cecily.

*There is a rustle of the curtain where Lady Katherine is hiding, and James IV checks to see if his father has noticed, but he has not.*

**James IV:** What? Princess who?

**James III:** Cecily of York. Queen Elizabeth's sister.

**James IV:** The Queen of England?

**James III:** Aye.

**James IV:** No father, I will not. I wish to marry Lady Katherine Gordon.

**James III:** So your mother tells me. I understand that you have formed an attachment to your childhood playmate. But this attachment must go no further.

**James IV:** You cannot--

**James III:** It is clear I have let things go on unchecked for much too long. I have neglected my duties to you.

**James IV:** I see. You suddenly care about your eldest son now that he has become useful to you.

**James III:** I do not pretend to care for you any more than I ever have. But you are the heir and Scotland's future King. It is your duty to Scotland to marry Princess Cecily and end the bloodshed between our two countries.

**James IV:** Why is that *my* duty? I have never wished to be King any more than you desired me to.

**James III:** It matters little what you *wish* for. It is your birthright.

**James IV:** Father, can't you see? You're turning your people against you. Scotland does not want to make her enemy an ally. Your Lord Chamberlain deserted you, you've turned your own brother against you. Alexander blamed you for our defeat at Berwick. And I cannot help but think he was right. You let the English take our land.

**James III:** You do not understand boy, that sacrifices must sometimes be made for the greater goal.

**James IV:** And what is that, for Scotland to become slave to England? If that is your goal then you shan't have my support. I will join the rebellion against you that Alexander began.

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**James III:** Have you not a drop of loyalty in your blood? I'm ashamed to call you my son.

**James IV:** Loyalty? When have you ever shown me an ounce of that? A man who visits his family every few years or when it suits him. I don't think I know you well enough to call you my father.

**James III:** Then you may call me King as do the rest of my subjects. For you are that, and you shall obey me.

**James IV:** If you tell me to marry Princess Cecily, then I cannot. I will not become a puppet for the King of England.

**James III:** To disobey your King is treason.

**James IV:** And to follow a godless prophecy is a sin.