

# Dark Ladies

A ONE HOUR  
HISTORICAL DRAMA SERIES

BY

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**LOGLINE:** When William Shakespeare's scandalous private sonnets are published without his consent, his life and the lives of three very different women are thrown into chaos. *Dark Ladies* moves backwards in time in each successive episode to the love affair itself, revealing: Who was Shakespeare's Dark Lady lover? And what fucker stole his Sonnets...and why?

**SYNOPSIS:** True Fact—William Shakespeare's Sonnets outline a love triangle between Will, a "Fair Youth," and a "Dark Lady" with whom Will was in love and in lust. On the day the Sonnets are published in 1609, all of London is ABUZZ. Will's life is blown up, as are the lives of three women suspected of being the Dark Lady:

Avisa, a courtier, suffers from depression and is desperate to be part of the intellectual circles her husband keeps her from. Lucy, a brothel madam of West African descent, aches for her days as a court dancer, while trying to keep her sex workers safe and alive. And Aemilia, a crypto-Jew and a proto-feminist poet, needs to publish her work in order to escape her abusive husband.

The plague-infested, superstitious, science-fearing, xenophobic, monarchical, patriarchal, chilly, damp, and smelly London of 1592-1609 that our characters inhabit is a wackadoodle place. The fact that everyone drinks ale from breakfast on (the water's dangerous) and walks around soused all day isn't the only reason, but it certainly doesn't help.

As we move backwards in time through our characters' lives to the reveal of the affair itself,

- we'll be seeing a prison uprising and an actual coup-against-the-Queen kind of uprising,
- we'll meet a sex-addicted, astrologer-doctor who sleeps with almost all of his patients,
- we'll experience the deaths of beloved children and infanticide, and
- there'll be heads on pillows and heads on spikes.

In the end, we'll see the love triangle with the true Dark Lady unfold and see why the other two women also forged deep, abiding feelings for Will. And we'll jump back up to 1609 to find out how and why the Sonnets' thief pulled off the heist.

**WHY US/WHY NOW?** Their world was nuts...but ours is now, too. Since things have grown worse rather than better for women (especially trans women) and for nonbinary people since #MeToo, we're seeing more and more parallels to the lives of women in Shakespeare's London—parallels that will be really clear to our audience.

As co-authors of *Speak the Speech! Shakespeare's Monologues Illuminated*, a compendium for understanding and acting Shakespeare that comprises years of research, we have a deep and intimate knowledge of Shakespeare and his world.

**SHOWCROSS:** With fictionalizations of real people and dark topics juxtaposed with humor, we like to say that *Dark Ladies* is what you get when *Hamnet*, *The Great*, and *Bridgerton* have been drinking ale all day, have a threesome, and somehow wind up with a kid.

