

An Owl in the Desert

by

Anna Carlisle

**Scenes from the life of Lady Anne Clifford
(1590 – 1676)**

**First performances:
Skipton Castle, August 2005
Brougham Castle, September 2005**

**Repeat performances:
Skipton Castle, August 2006
Brougham Castle, August 2006**

Characters:

**Lady Anne Clifford, rightful claimant to Clifford lands
of Yorkshire and Westmorland**

Announcer

**'Uncle Cumberland', 4th Earl of Westmorland
George Clifford, 3rd Earl of Westmorland**

**Richard Sackville, Earl of Dorset
Mr Wright, schoolteacher of Mallerstang
Gabriel Vincent, steward
Mr Grasty, parson of Ninekirks**

(The above male roles may be played by one actor or multiple actors.)

**'TENANTS' and 'MESSENGERS' will be played by members
of the audience**

**The years: 1605 – 1676
The places: Skipton and Brougham Castles, North Yorkshire**

Extract from:
Scene 3: Up against the king

Lady ANNE, wife of Richard Sackville; Richard SACKVILLE, Earl of Dorset

ANNE: *[off]* Stuart? A Stuart subject? Call me no Stuart! Tudor! Lancaster and Tudor – proud inheritor of Henry and Elizabeth, please! I die hard at their feet! ... This upstart Scotchman shall know my mettle. Supplant us from the north and throw his weight at me, would he? You may tell that king to go – hang – himself. *[She enters at a march.]* I have no fear. Even a king cannot overturn an Act of Parliament.

SACKVILLE: Dearest Anne – you are to London to visit this king. He means to make an agreement between you and me - your lord. London!

ANNE: To London? Rats! *[to the audience]* Twice I have been taken before the king and Richard has sided with him against me – to persuade me to surrender my right, my hard-fought right to my lands – which I shall *[she laughs]* – never do. My uncle and cousin may caretake while I am wed, but I shall inherit. ... I begged his majesty's - pardon. *[She and SACKVILLE bow and curtsey to an imaginary king.]* He asked me if I remembered that Lady Raleigh resides in the Tower, confined on a charge of her husband's treason. They listed - ...

SACKVILLE: ... all your faults and errors in this unpleasant business - and just how treasonous you stand. ... There is to be a Judges' Award to me. Will you come to an agreement? Sign away your 'rights' to Westmorland?

ANNE: Never, no matter what becomes of me and mine. My prizes have been fought and won for me by the godness of my holy mother, so much closer to God than a mere sideways king!

SACKVILLE: *[calls off loudly]* Send her the Primate! *[to ANNE]* - of all England. Of the church of your fine Henry. Of the God of your sainted mother. You will hearken to him.

ANNE: An Archbishop of Canterbury who taunts me to break my troth? *[to the audience]* Such persuasion he ungodly used: flattery and threats ... I am steeled still harder.

SACKVILLE: If you do not make an end - ...

ANNE: I will not yield – to commoner, Canterbury or king! *[to the audience]* Did they not see that the task was not mine to resolve? I will preserve my loyalties.

SACKVILLE: ... then I leave you to your perdition and take the child to London with me.

ANNE: *[She gasps and panics.]* Then go and never return! Here's the ring you wed me with. *[She pulls it off her finger.]* Sell it or melt it and pay off your debts. I will not consent.

SACKVILLE: *[outraged]* Refusal of your lord and master?!

ANNE: *[to the audience]* He begged me to recall that - ...

SACKVILLE: ... Lady Somerset escaped the Tower only by confessing her faults and was much pitied and pardoned.

ANNE: He cooed and cajoled ...

SACKVILLE: I would be a kind husband to you. If only you would give me the right to sell off - ...

ANNE: ... the Clifford estates? ...

SACKVILLE: ... to buy land for the Dorset estates! I am living beyond my means ...

ANNE: *[to SACKVILLE]* My uncle and cousin are present incumbents. Go bully them!