

Fall: The Tragedy of the Faerie Queen and her Councillors

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Character Descriptions

The Queen

The monarch of the forest fae. Whether through the works of magic, or by some innate part of her character, she has an almost irresistible dominatrix-like hold on her male subjects, despite being paralysed for the majority of the play. She is generally calm and observant, and quick to detect BS. She is capable of great love and concern, but also great cruelty. Her law forbids, on penalty of death, all other female creatures from entering the forest, which is harsh; and yet we see that she advocates for the other female characters of the play with a passionate feminism that no one else seems to share.

Female-identifying actor required; no doubling preferred

Galespring

One of the queen's councillors. Independent, faithful, impatient, and even rash. He serves the forest in his own way, preferring action over words.

Any gender acceptable; no doubling preferred

Harpswift

One of the queen's councillors, and her confessed favourite. Master of spies for the forest. Also one of two fae who have betrayed the queen. He genuinely wants what is best for the forest. Spiteful. Possible history between him and the queen.

Any gender acceptable; no doubling preferred

Darestone

One of the queen's councillors. Also serves as the forest's historian. The other traitor. Smooth-talker, persuasive, and a bit of a kiss-ass. Definitely a touch of Iago and Cassius in there.

Any gender acceptable; although male preferred if doubling with Alabaster/Ghost

Foakswin

Councillor, and ambassador for the fae. Generally docile and pleasant, but (justifiably) retaliates when under abuse. Suffers visions.

Any gender acceptable; could double with fae with suit in Scene XIII, and perhaps with Æthemfrethis

Tarrychill

Councillor. Grumpy. Complains too much.

Any gender acceptable; could double with a clown and elf constable

Thorndew

Councillor, and foreman of the Mornmoot council. Levelheaded and loyal. Peacekeeper.

Any gender acceptable; could double with a clown and elf constable

Malleus

Captain of the forest's dwarven guard, and formerly the king of the dwarves before the queen subjugated them. Stoic and obedient.

Male-identifying actor preferred; could double with Orc and General

The King

Monarch of the humans. Very pro-mankind, but cares little for other societies. Values his child Cyrthwyn for little more than their sword arm. Sickly.

Male-identifying actor required; could double with Alvin*

Alabaster

Powerful and bookish mage, and the king's brother. Had dealings with Harpswift and Darestone to conspire against the faerie queen. Worldly and learned. Meek in the presence of his regal brother. Likely one of the few humans who could have slipped into elfish territory undetected and bedded an elf.....

Male-identifying actor preferred; could double with Darestone, Ghost* and Æthemfrethis

Cyrthwyn (pronounced “KERTH-win”)

Champion of the king, and his “daughter.” I have deliberately put Cyrthwyn's gender identity into question. Bred to fight, and by a father who wanted a soldier instead of a child. Very honourable and upright, and to a fault. It is that very honour that costs them their arm.

Non-binary actor preferred, otherwise female; could double with gaoler if Nathir does not

The General

Chief commander of the human forces. Has a deep hatred of fae. Male-identifying actor preferred; could double with Orc and Malleus **Alvin**

Born of an elf “mother” by an unknown male human, and then left on the doorstep of a house in the human realm as an infant. Worked as a mariner before the elves came to take him back. Looks completely human, but inherited immunity to magic through his elf side. The loss of his brother at the hands of his own lover Marra, in addition to his already dire circumstances, takes a great toll on his mental state.

Male-identifying actor preferred, especially if doubling with King (see above)

Marra

A sea nymph. Little is known about water spirits. Not used to moving on land, but adapts quickly. Nimble, fierce and bold. Devoted to Alvin, even in his anger. Dislikes being told what to do, and is not looking for approval. Fluent in the Elf language, and probably others, too.

Female-identifying actor required; could double with messenger

The Ghost of Victor Breech

The ghost appears once, to Alvin only, in a single scene that smacks of Prince Hamlet's encounter with his father's ghost. In life, Victor was a hunter. Very prejudiced, especially toward sea nymphs and mermaids and the like. Not Alvin's brother by blood, but very protective of him. It is up to the director and actor playing Alvin whether this apparition actually materialises, or is merely Alvin's imagination.

Male-identifying actor preferred; could double with Darestone, Alabaster and Æthemfrethis

The Orc

The last of his kind. Both "orc" and "ogre" are terms used for his species, but never by him himself. We do not know what they called themselves. He is an unparalleled warrior, a straight talker, very intelligent, and perhaps, of all the characters in the play, sees the most clearly. Very old, and has suffered immense loss. Understands that the earth is his master, and not the other way round. His battleaxe is enchanted and can deflect magical spells. He fancies himself the steward of the forest, his "garden," and kills "weeds" as a sort of vigilante.

Male-identifying actor preferred; could double with Malleus and General, or Malleus and Æthemfrethis

The "Clowns"

"Clowns," of course, in the Elizabethan theatre/commedia dell'arte sense. They are the comic relief, and provide some exposition and

background information. Think the gravediggers from *Hamlet*, or the Fool from *Lear*. They are two random fae that Galespring presses into service to help him unravel the strange happenings in the forest.

Any gender acceptable; could double with Tarrychill and Thorndew and elf constables

Nathir (pronounced “NAY-theer”)

One of Harpswift’s spies in the human realm.

Any gender acceptable; could double with gaoler if Cyrthwyn does not

Æthemfrethis (pronounced “ATH-emm-freth-eece”)

Plenipotentiary for the elves, sent to the forest to represent them before the queen. Direct, and unyielding. Shows little regard for the volume of tragedy that has befallen the fae, and reacts in a somewhat irreverent way to the learning of the queen’s passing.

Any gender acceptable; could double with Orc/Malleus, or Alabaster/Ghost, or Foakswin/fae with suit

Mercenaries could double with Garter, Ribbon and Caecilius, and with miscellaneous dwarves, and with knights, and with fae in Scene XIX; any gender acceptable

Side 1: The Queen

QUEEN

You councillors are so engrafted in
The particles and form of your procedure
That you lose the sense and meaning of it.
In this assembly are there three of you
Another two are present not; the sixth,
My trusted Harpswift, master of my spies,
Whose most unkindly rapture did I watch
Whilst limb and magic capability
Ignored the protestation of my heart,
By timeless fortune cannot come this hour—
One of the motives of your meeting now—
Thereby reducing by one the greatest count
Achievable in the gathering of your minds.
If my arithmetic be true, then present
Fellowship doth constitute a quorum,
Legitimizing by the book this Moot.
If you remain unmoved by rationale,
Then let your minds be overruled by sense;
The faerie realm is all amiss, beset
With dark enchantments, spells and enemies;
And theft, the instrument that they all share,
Hath in one atonal, dissonant chord
Robbed you of a councillor, our land a season,
Our citizens rest and me mobility
As well as magics — magics I have used
To serve the sole and noble ends of weal
And benefaction to our commonwealth.
These misdeeds should bear a stench so foul
The three of you find cause to them correct.
You will meet here and now, my honest hands,
If not by sense or reason, then by command.

Side 2: Marra

Will you hear me, you poor, fantastic man?
If in your choler be a neck can swallow
Rash opinion, you may hear this tale.
Upon the rocks which stand in altitude
Above the harbour's placid shoals I basked.
To wait in joyful expectation of
The object of my fancy, who was soon
To leave his hovel and commence his labours
By the sea; this have I been wont
To do, and so beginneth any day
He visits me. But on the day of which
I speak there was, of course, no visitation;
Or, rather, no desired visitors,
For those who knocked upon your door that morn
Came not with friendly tidings. When they took you,
The organ of my love commanded me,
And I pursued them through the faerie wood,
That I might save you from their custody.
Some time in the wood began another suit,
Aye, your huntsman brother after me,
Accoutred for the chase, his blade and cannon
Ready at his beck—your brother must
He truly be—O, the fool, the fool!
He must have thought me in confederacy
With them! It was the fault of prejudice—
O, damn his hasty thought; damn his hate!
The look he gave me was his first assault;
I loosed an arrow in his leathered breast;
A nice display of force to stay him back,
No more. But this warning he did not heed,
And chased me off the trail unto a pool
That takes the shinking of a waterfall.
I farther could not run, nor could I scale
The grand cascade, and as I stood knee-deep
He straight discharged his cannon's lead into
My thigh, whereupon he made demand of me

To answer for your seizure whilst he held
His dagger by my throat so near that even
The slightest breath of contradiction would
Have spurred the blade to cross it; so I from speech
Forbore and gave my hand that faculty:
I touched his cheek, and he his dagger dropped
As if o'erta'en by some remorseful mood;
But, fearing fickle such a change of state
And prone to reversion—O, my love, forgive me!—
I stuck the self-same dagger in his heart,
And those remorse-cooled eyes then went cold,
Colder than the steel that pierced his bosom.
As I a spirit of the water am,
The rinsing of my wound restored my thigh,
But your brother, being human, could not receive
Such remedy; I laid him neath a willow
And, like a hound that's lost the scent i' th' chase,
Back did I hark until I found again
The tracks betraying the path of your abduction.
My tale is told; respond as you see fit.

Side 3: Harpswift

The king is wise, and yet he is not. For certain, he is wise, for who would trust a traitor after he hath oped his treasury of intelligence and emptied the vault? No, his coffers voided, he shall and must needs make his means again, and I dare say, by any means. No, no, he is untrustworthy; the traitor is base, but the empty traitor cannot be trusted, and therefore the king hath done well to include me here. But he is unwise, too, for in his imprisoning me he fulfils his own prophecy of betrayal. Wherefore should I endure such opprobrium? Such unkingly disgrace? Well, as they say here in the human realm: no good deed, no good deed. Then there's his brother; why, that was a betrayal — truly one apt for relation — did ever you bear witness to such cowardice? Marked you how his skin grew whiter than his beard? There is more spine in a gadfly buzzing about a diseased cow than in that almighty magician when he speaks to his sickly brother. Not a word uttered in voice of my appeal, no advocacy. Devise, mind; amends must follow for these injuries. And, cease, mouth, or thou shalt drive me mad loosing breath upon earless subjects. O, alack, Foakswin! If thou have any love for me left, say aught to me.

Side 4: Alvin

Faith, I am weary; I run, I tire, I thirst.
Most stubborn sun, like whinging child at bedtime,
Thou dost awake remain and brace my eyelids.
But lo, relief!

He drinks from the pool

And here a willow! Hanging boughs, deceive
My eyes with shade and tell them night is come.

He goes to lie down and sees the body of his dead brother at the base of the tree.

O spiteful heavens! O most unwholesome sight!
Now flown is sleep, and restless terror here!
Is any ounce of life yet in this vessel
That once contained my brother?—
Bloody, but not drained, nor cold, nor pale;
In thy effusion thou unmoving liest,
And thou art dead indeed, but not yet fall'n
To decadence; 'tis strange, 'tis wondrous strange.
O fool! No game in all the woods o' th' world
Could sate thine appetite; didst thou intend
To kill them all? If thou had not miscarried
In taking Marra, couldst thou have carried thence
And wrested me from the clutches of the elves?
Alack, there is no boot; sleep, my brother;
Thou hast what every man at some time hunts,
And hast fulfilled thy final ventry.

Side 5: The Orc

The earth's a schoolmaster, and we its pupils;
Each season a lecture, each plant a course of study.
Through listening we wonders did achieve;
We warded off all manner of disease,
The metal that we smithed, unbreakable,
And in our people's tongue there was no word
For famine, as we did understand to take
Modestly from the earth, and give back
Tenfold, thereby preserving her rich plenty.
We knew the virtue of civility;
Our songs were but of peace, each step we trod
A salutation to our giving ground;
But this civility we did forget
When she, your tyrant queen, waged war with us;
Our libraries became armouries,
Our medicines poisons, our hatchets battleaxes.
Yearmeal decreased the numbers of our clan
Until but I, my wife and children stood,
And they were slain year last; autumn did come
Excellent early then, methinks in spite
Of the fell deed; methinks the earth is moved
To ire, and with the sun contrives disorder.

Side 6: The King

Good Harpswift, to this land art come a stranger,
And in this land hast rendered service well,
As does the mason visiting a house
To do the work the owner called him for;
But, once the bricks are laid, the mortar set,
He tarries not for supper or cordial chat,
For he doth know he's not his sudden friend,
And that his work done, and done well,
Must needs be compensated well, no more,
No less; no courtesy extenuated,
No entertainment, no favour in return.
This house shall better stand with all thy help,
And for it thou dost have our deepest thanks,
But to its worth and comforts art not heir.
Thou hast survived thy utility;
Therefore, thou must contented be to be
Included in our castle's dungeon at least
Until thine unfit queen be dispossessed
Of her domain, lest we find thy taste
For treachery entices thee too much
For us to keep thee large; meantime should we
Desire more secrets, it would boot thee well
To disclose them freely on demand of them.
Foakswin, we are sorry thou hast heard
Too much to keep thy liberty, for on
Thyself do we impose a penalty
Of like tenor. But, lo, deject you not;
For if that Harpswift's aid have been as true
As any that he former gave the queen,
Then think but brief shall your inclusions be.
Now, brother, and daughter Cyrthwyn, you must go
With us and with the men of war confer;
If humankind and country be to thrive,
Without our limits, then, are we to strive.

Side 7: Cyrthwyn

Addressing the Faerie Queen.

‘Tis I, Your Grace, who hide.
I am Cyrthwyn, daughter of the human king,
A champion, warrior, defender—and woman born.
Noble Galespring told me of your law,
And bid me put this antic on, wherein
I’d hide behind my manly face. His regard
For my life I note, but no more of that;
I do not need a champion myself.
Most beautiful sovereign of the faerie wood,
I come before you to affirm the news
You heard; you and your people stand in great
Peril; my father means to issue a power
To seize your woods, and for your lives cares not.
But though the threat be imminent, there stand
Before you a blade most able, and a brain that knows
The stratagems and tricks of human war;
If by the saving of your life I earned
Your trust, I pray you, do of them make use.