

A Ring of Lies Cast List

4 Male, 5 Female, and Extras 2M, 3F, 2M/F

JESTER (M) the professional funny-man of the court.

FIONA (F) a servant woman in the castle.

TOWN CRIER (M) the professional announcement-maker of the court.

PRINCE GARETH (M) a quiet and shy monarch, though the actor need not be so in real life.

QUEEN MUM (F) domineering mother to Prince Gareth. She would like to be the regent for a while longer. A good while longer.

DUCHESS OF YORK (F) wants a rich and weak husband. The Prince fits that description.

PRINCESS DAFFODIL (F) wants a kind and honest husband. The Prince fits that description.

DUKE OF BURGUNDY (M) has his eye on Princess Daffodil. He wants to win her . . . wealth.

WISE WOMAN (F) a true and discerning woman of the wood.

SERVANTS (NON-SPEAKING) (2 M/3 F) Larry, Harry, Mary, Keri, and Vivian: they can set a table faster than an Indy 500 pit stop.

2 GUARDS (NON-SPEAKING) (M/F) escort service to the dungeon.

Sample Pages

FANFARE AND WELCOME

(When the guests have been seated, a BRASS FANFARE will signal all entertainers to clear the hall. Lights up on stage. Another BRASS FANFARE. JESTER enters.)

JESTER: Good evening, gentle folk, and welcome to Cumberland Castle! The Queen is looking forward to—*(Distracted by the sudden entrance of FIONA and the servants.)*

FIONA: *(To SERVANTS.)* Go, go, go! *(The servants enter and set out dishes and goblets as quickly as possible. Think of an Indy 500 pit stop. After they finish, they come to attention in a straight line.)* Mary! Too slow on the goblet filling. And you spilled three drops. Three drops! Keri, don't rattle those dishes. You're a scullery maid, not a percussionist. Larry, keep your toes en

pointe. This is a ballet, not a break dance. Harry, clean those fingernails. *(Looks down.)* And those toenails. Vivian . . . Vivian, change your name. Next time I want it faster, quieter, and cleaner. Is that understood?

SERVANTS: Ma'am, yes ma'am.

FIONA: That is all. Dismissed. *(SERVANTS exit quickly.)*

JESTER: Fiona, are you all right? You seem . . . on edge.

FIONA: *(Crosses to JESTER.)* Of course I'm on the edge. The Duke of Burgundy is coming to dinner.

JESTER: Not that sack of whine. He is never satisfied. He's not bringing his neighbor –

FIONA: Oh, yes. The Duchess of York—

JESTER: You mean the Ruckus of Dork?

FIONA: Yes, her.

JESTER: She is a loud, obnoxious, harpy. Why are they coming to the castle?

FIONA: The Queen Mum is still trying to wed the Prince and the Duchess.

JESTER: Didn't the Prince hide in the dungeon the last time she was here?

FIONA: Yes. He said that if he had to spend time with an iron maiden, he preferred the quiet one. *(Beat.)* And to make this more complicated, Princess Daffodil is coming.

JESTER: Never has a woman so fit her name. Whenever I think of the Duke of Burgundy, that boorish swine, chasing that delicate flower, I see –

FIONA: Red?

JESTER: Burgundy, actually. He does not love her. Besides, she loves the Prince.

FIONA: Of course she does. Everyone but the Prince knows it.

JESTER: Even if he did know, the Prince is too shy, and he would never cross his mother. She clearly favors the Duchess to be his wife.

FIONA: I will quit if the Prince marries the Duchess. She's never happy. "The table wasn't set quickly enough. The goblets are half-empty. The main course is not quite dead."

JESTER: Well, at the harvest feast –

FIONA: The Duchess said she liked her venison rare.

JESTER: That was a rare sight, all right.

FIONA: There is no pleasing that woman. She finds fault with everything.

JESTER: Princess Daffodil would make a much better queen.

TOWN CRIER: (*Enters hurriedly.*) Jester, what are you doing?

JESTER: Match-making?

TOWN CRIER: Well, clear out! The Queen Mum will be arriving soon! And do you know who's coming to dinner?

JESTER: The Duke of Burgundy, the Duchess of York, and Princess Daffodil?

TOWN CRIER: (*Beat.*) I see news travels fast.

FIONA: I'd better get ready. It's going to be a long night! (*Exits.*)

Later, the Duchess recounts her journey to the castle . . .

QUEEN MUM: So, Duchess, the Prince and I are so glad you came. How was your journey here?

DUCHESS: Absolutely atrocious. We met the most horrid commoner near Penny Lane.

DUKE: A witch by the look of her. (*FIONA takes notable interest and listens closely.*) You really do need to purge your woods more frequently.

QUEEN MUM: Indeed, it is time for another round of evictions. You get the worst sort of people in those hovels.

DUCHESS: She was spouting the most seditious nonsense. She had the nerve to call me strong-willed.

PRINCESS: The words she used were harpy, harridan, and battle-ax. She must have a whole shelf of reference books in that hovel of hers.

DUKE: She dared to call me thrifty.

PRINCESS: Actually, she said that your purse is like a ravenous boar. *(Beat.)* I thought that you would appreciate the metaphor for being cheap.

DUKE: I am not cheap.

PRINCESS: *(To PRINCE.)* Oh, please. He still has the first shilling he got from his tax on puppies.

QUEEN MUM: I can assume that you rebuked her by burning her hovel to the ground?

DUCHESS: We would have, but someone stopped us. *(DUCHESS and DUKE look at PRINCESS.)*

PRINCESS: I found her charming.

DUCHESS: She said that you were coddled.

PRINCESS: Well, after looking at her home, I have to agree. *(Beat.)* And I'm still thinking about her parting words.

QUEEN MUM: And what were those, pray tell?

PRINCESS: That the Prince would find the truth if only he lived the lie.

QUEEN MUM: *(Pause.)* What could that possibly mean?

DUKE: Blather and nonsense, if you ask me.

QUEEN MUM: Well, such impertinence cannot go unpunished. Guards! *(GUARDS rush in.)* Go to Penny Lane and bring me the old Woman of the Wood. *(FIONA smiles and exits. GUARDS exit quickly.)* I'll show her what it means to live a lie.

The Prince takes a break from the feast . . .

(JESTER & TOWN CRIER enter; PRINCE enters from opposite side.)

JESTER: Prince Gareth, what are you doing here?

PRINCE: I needed some peace and quiet.

TOWN CRIER: Peace and quiet? In that case, let me shoo the Jester on out of here.

PRINCE: No, the Jester's fine. He doesn't interrupt me every time I speak.

JESTER: Is something bothering you, my prince?

PRINCE: (*Looks around.*) Well, yes. You see, I love Princess Daffodil, but she doesn't know I exist.

TOWN CRIER: Well, I've heard that—

PRINCE: And to make matters worse, the Duke of Burgundy is here, and I can't get a word in edgewise.

JESTER: Yes, but the Princess is in love with—

PRINCE: With the Duke. I know. He even wrote her poetry. Or should I say, stole her some poetry.

JESTER: But, Prince, if you'll just listen for a moment—

PRINCE: Oh, how can I compete with such an accomplished suitor?

TOWN CRIER: But I don't think you have to—

PRINCE: And my mother thinks there will be a betrothal soon. He doesn't deserve her.

JESTER: But we're trying to tell you that—

PRINCE: And that is what's bothering me! (*Exits and returns to Royal Table.*)

JESTER: (*To TOWN CRIER.*) What was that about getting a word in edgewise?

TOWN CRIER: Maybe we still can. (*Exits with JESTER.*)

The Wise Woman is brought to the castle . . .

(*FIONA enters as GUARDS bring in the WISE WOMAN.*)

FIONA: I cannot believe it. It's really you. The Wise Woman of the Wood.

WISE WOMAN: Do I know you?

FIONA: I was a servant when you came to the court of King William ten years ago. But I thought you'd look older. (*Beat.*) You haven't aged a day. What's your secret?

WISE WOMAN: Clean living and a clear conscience. (*Beat.*) And Botox.

FIONA: Botox?

WISE WOMAN: I inject cobra venom in my face.

FIONA: That makes you look younger?

WISE WOMAN: It makes you not care how you look. *(Beat.)* So, why have you moved to this castle? I thought the Ring of Truth improved things in King William's court?

FIONA: It worked wonders. The King is more humble, and women are now equals. I didn't move because of that.

WISE WOMAN: Oh. *(Beat.)* So, you moved here for a man, did you?

FIONA: No, this castle has a great dental plan, and I . . . oh, all right. Yes, I moved here for the Town Crier. But he doesn't even know I'm alive.

WISE WOMAN: And now you're in a Court where the women are not treating the men with respect.

FIONA: How did you know?

WISE WOMAN: They don't call me the Wise Woman of the Wood for nothing.

FIONA: I'm so glad you're here. With the Ring of Truth—

WISE WOMAN: Sorry. I lost the Ring of Truth.

FIONA: You lost it?

WISE WOMAN: In a poker game to a crazy Scotsman. His four aces trumped my flush. Now that he has the Ring of Truth, I imagine it will just rust away.

FIONA: So, you can't help us?

WISE WOMAN: All I have is the Ring of Lies. *(Fishes a ring from her pocket and puts it on.)*

FIONA: That's the Ring of Lies?

WISE WOMAN: No.

FIONA: But, you just said. *(Beat.)* Oh, I see. You say the opposite of what you mean, correct?

WISE WOMAN: Incorrect.

FIONA: So, how will this help—

JESTER: *(Enters and speaks to GUARDS.)* There you are! Is this the Wise Woman of the Wood?

WISE WOMAN: I am the Stupid Man of the Plain.

JESTER: *(Beat.)* I don't even know what to say to that.

FIONA: Jester, look at her hand. She is wearing –

JESTER: *(Looks.)* Is that the Ring of Truth? Keep that thing away from me!

FIONA: Relax, Jester. It's the Ring of Lies. She flushed the Ring of Truth.

JESTER: Excuse me?

FIONA: It's a long story. But I think the Ring of Lies can help the Prince.

JESTER: We'll have to talk about this later. The Queen Mum is waiting—very impatiently—for this woman! Let's go!

(Lights up on Royal Table. FIONA exits.)

QUEEN MUM: Guards, what took you so long? I sent you to Penny Lane, not the Norwegian Wood. *(GUARDS bring the WISE WOMAN forward then step to the side.)*

DUCHESS: That's the woman, my Queen.

QUEEN MUM: Are you the woman who spreads lies about the good nobles of this land?

WISE WOMAN: Yes, I am not.

QUEEN MUM: Well which is it?

WISE WOMAN: I am not the Wise Woman.

QUEEN MUM: Agreed. You are very unwise. Now, your answers to these next questions will determine how much time you spend in the dungeon.