

A Ring of Truth Cast List

3 Male, 3 Female, 1 M/F, and Extras

JESTER (M) the professional funny-man of the court. This character should be particularly good with facial expression and physical humor.

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

KING (M) an irritable monarch, though the actor need not be so in real life.

QUEEN (F) a wise and patient woman who's married to the irritable monarch.

LORD DARNELL (M) a nobleman and friend of the king (as much as you can be friends).

LADY DARNELL (F) a noblewoman with opinions of her own.

FORTUNE TELLER (F) a true and discerning woman of the wood.

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

COURTIER (NON-SPEAKING) (M/F) general doorman of the court.

SERVANTS (NON-SPEAKING) (M/F) Uh, you know: they're servants.

Sample Pages

A ring that makes you tell the truth is being passed around the castle . . .

TOWN CRIER: How now, good Jester? What is the news?

JESTER: You would not believe it! Lady Darnell has begun to act in the same strange manner as the Queen.

TOWN CRIER: Do tell!

JESTER: Well, Lady Darnell had the boldness to comment on the King's eating habits! And it got worse. She told the King that he was mean-spirited.

TOWN CRIER: *(Pushes JESTER back.)* Shut up!

JESTER: *(Confused.)* There is no need to worry, Town Crier. The King is not around to hear.

TOWN CRIER: No, I just meant to express my . . . shock. She actually said that to the King?

JESTER: Oh, yes. Of course, her husband blamed it on a recent ague. She must have been feverish in order to blurt out something like that to the King.

TOWN CRIER: Curious indeed. *(Looks over and sees the ring on the table where the QUEEN was sitting.)* What is this? *(He holds it up.)*

JESTER: Why, it's the ring that the Fortune Teller gave to the Queen.

TOWN CRIER: Well, I had better return it to her. *(He places ring on his finger.)* Hmm. It's a bit tight. Very elegant, though. Perhaps I will keep it. *(He claps his hand over his mouth.)* Now, why would I say such a thing? Well, I doubt that she will notice it missing. She already has so many jewels. *(He claps his hand over his mouth.)* I could sell it for a handsome profit. *(He claps his hand over his mouth.)* What is going on?

JESTER: Town Crier, are you okay? *(Looks around nervously.)* You're starting to scare me a bit.

TOWN CRIER: Jester! I think it's the ring!

JESTER: What are you talking about?

TOWN CRIER: It makes me say things that I don't want to.

JESTER: Like what?

TOWN CRIER: Like . . . the truth! I can't tell the truth! You can't sell the news with the truth!

JESTER: Oh, surely, you are imagining this.

TOWN CRIER: No, I don't think so.

JESTER: All right. Let me ask you a question.

TOWN CRIER: I don't think that's a good idea--

JESTER: Do you think my jokes are funny?

TOWN CRIER: No. *(He claps his hand over his mouth. Pauses. Smiles weakly.)* I mean, funny is such a limiting word. I think your jokes are incredibly . . .

JESTER: Yes?

TOWN CRIER: Awful. *(He claps his hand over his mouth, but shouts the next two so that they can be heard.)* Appalling! Horrific!

JESTER: I see. And do you think I'm smart?

TOWN CRIER: Yes! Smart . . . aleck.

JESTER: And does my tunic make me look fat?

TOWN CRIER: Ginormous! *(He claps his hand over his mouth.)* Jester, stop! *(Frantically, he tries to get the ring off.)* Jester, I can't get it off! Help me out! What if the King comes back? He can't find me like this!

JESTER: Like what? Painfully honest?

TOWN CRIER: *(TOWN CRIER is trying everything to get the ring off.)* It's just a matter of taste with your jokes. That's all! I have good taste, and you do not. *(He claps his hand over his mouth.)*

JESTER: What? That's laughable!

TOWN CRIER: About as laughable as your jokes!

JESTER: Oh, I'll make you pay for this affront! Hark, here comes the King now! *(Smiles.)* This could prove interesting.

TOWN CRIER: Jester, old buddy, old pal! You've got to help me out! Help me get this ring off!

JESTER: I will . . . if you say you love my jokes.

TOWN CRIER: I luh . . . luh . . . luh-oathe them. *(He claps his hand over his mouth.)*

JESTER: Why you! *(Takes a step toward TOWN CRIER just as the KING enters.)*

TOWN CRIER: The King! The King! *(He tries madly to inconspicuously remove the ring.)*

JESTER: Your majesty! Good day to you, sire!

KING: I do not believe that it is a good day. The women in the kingdom seem to be in revolt.

JESTER: Not true, sire. You have the respect and esteem of every good woman in the kingdom.

KING: Are you saying that my Queen is not a good woman?

JESTER: Of course not, sire! I meant that your Queen holds you with great respect and esteem. Isn't that right, Town Crier?

TOWN CRIER: *(Struggling with the ring.)* What do you mean, Jester?

JESTER: Let me be absolutely clear. I'll make is a simple "yes" or "no" question. Do you believe that the Queen holds the King in great respect and esteem?

TOWN CRIER: *(Struggles not to say anything. We see the visual struggle in his facial expression.)* Nnnn . . . oo.

KING: *(Non-plussed.)* Well, judging from her actions last night, I would agree with the Town Crier. Thank you for your honesty, good sir. *(TOWN CRIER is visibly relieved and tries to exit.)*

JESTER: *(A bit frustrated, he grabs TOWN CRIER and pulls him back.)* Yes, I also admire your honesty, Town Crier. So, I'll ask you another question. Do you believe that the Queen really thinks that the King is . . . mean-spirited?

TOWN CRIER: *(Struggles with the ring and fights the answer.)* Yyyyyyyyyyyyyyyees.

KING: What is wrong with Town Crier? Does he have the ague?

JESTER: I'm sure it's only a passing chill, your majesty. But I do have one more question! Town Crier, do you think that the King is mean-spirited?

TOWN CRIER: *(He claps his hand over his mouth. You hear a lot of mumbling.)*

JESTER: I can't quite make that out. Could you take your hands away from your mouth?

TOWN CRIER: *(His arms go stiff at his sides and his fists are clenched. He has his teeth tightly clenched so that he cannot speak. Slowly, with much bodily jerking, his body fights him to form the letter "Y." This is a great opportunity for physical humor.)*

KING: What was that?

JESTER: It appeared to be the letter "Y," sire.

TOWN CRIER: *(With more bodily jerking, his body forms the letter "E.")*

KING: Again, what is he doing?

JESTER: I believe he's spelling out a word. Kind of like charades. I think he just made the letter "E."

TOWN CRIER: *(One more last convulsive struggle. His body forms the letter "S.")*

JESTER: Oh, I've got it! Y-E-S! That's spells yes! He does think you are mean-spirited! Do I win a prize for guessing the right answer?

KING: What?

JESTER: Well, I think I'd at least get a point for my team.

KING: You think I am mean-spirited?

JESTER: Oh no, sire. The Town Crier does.

KING: I was talking to the Town Crier! *(To TOWN CRIER.)* Is this true? You think that I am mean-spirited?

TOWN CRIER: *(As if he's exploding.)* Yes! Yes, I do! *(He claps his hand over his mouth.)*

KING: WHAT? This is an outrage! Guards, throw him in the dungeon! For this, you shall die in the morning! *(Enter two GUARDS who begin to take TOWN CRIER away.)*

JESTER: *(Under his breath.)* Well, your majesty certainly proved the Town Crier wrong. Mean-spirited indeed!

KING: What?

TOWN CRIER: *(Struggling with the GUARDS, he reaches out his hand.)* Jester, help me!

JESTER: *(TOWN CRIER clasps JESTER's hand.)* I'm sorry! This has gone too far, my friend. *(The GUARDS pull TOWN CRIER away from JESTER, and the ring comes off into the JESTER's hand. The GUARDS haul TOWN CRIER away.)*

KING: Jester, what is that you have in your hand?

JESTER: A ring. *(He then realizes that he has the Ring of Truth and drops it on the ground; he runs away from it as if it might bite him.)*

KING: *(The KING walks over and picks-up the ring.)* Why, it is the Queen's ring. The Town Crier had it. He is not only a liar, but also a thief!

JESTER: Oh, there must be some mistake, sire. Surely—

KING: Do you contradict me, Jester?

JESTER: Er, no sire. It's just that—

KING: I don't want to hear another word. *(KING holds out the ring toward JESTER.)* Jester, take this ring to my Queen right away.

JESTER: *(Hesitates.)* Uh, just at this moment? Isn't she taking care of Lady Darnell?

KING: I want you to take this to her right now!

JESTER: I really think it would mean more coming from you.

KING: Jester! You are trying my patience! Take this ring! *(JESTER holds out his hand hesitantly. KING places ring on JESTER's finger.)* Keep that on your finger until you see the Queen.

JESTER: *(JESTER stares at the ring on his finger and stares at the KING, then runs off stage.)*

Eventually the JESTER gets the ring . . .

KING: Ridiculous! My subjects love me. Jester, am I mean-spirited?

JESTER: *(He is frozen with a look of abject horror, then he turns and tries to run. The GUARDS catch him and turn him around toward the KING.)* The ague! The ague!

KING: What? You have the ague also?

JESTER: Ye . . . ye . . . ye . . . *(The JESTER is unable to lie.)* ya never know, I might get it . . . someday . . . if I'm lucky.

KING: If you don't have the ague, then I can trust your judgment. Answer the question. Am I mean-spirited?

JESTER: *(He uses his hands to manually shake his head no, but his head resists by nodding yes up and down, so that his head shakes in all directions. He ends up having a wrestling match with his head and ends up writhing on the floor.)*

LADY DARNELL: If that's not the ague, then he is possessed by a demon.

LORD DARNELL: Or lost his wits.

QUEEN: Or possessed by a witless demon.

KING: Jester, what is the matter with you?

JESTER: I am possessed. *(ALL gasp and draw back.)*

KING: By a demon?

JESTER: By this ring! *(He holds up his hand.)*

QUEEN: Why, that is the ring given me by the Fortune Teller of the wood.

LADY DARNELL: That is the ring I found and planned to keep, er, planned to *return* to my Queen.

LORD DARNELL: How does this ring possess you, Jester?

JESTER: *(He sits up and says with resignation.)* I cannot tell a lie. *(They all wait expectantly for him to finish the sentence. He notices and continues.)* That's it. I cannot tell a lie.

KING: How can that be?

QUEEN: It was a gift from the Fortune Teller. It has magical qualities.

KING: *(Beginning to understand the implications.)* Well, then, Jester, you can answer my question. Am I mean-spirited?

JESTER: What do you want?

KING: I want the truth!

JESTER: *(In your best Jack Nicholson voice.)* You can't handle the truth!

KING: Answer the question!

JESTER: *(With a sigh of resignation, he starts off softly but builds up steam.)* You are . . . mean-spirited. A bully, in fact. A tyrant. A brow-beater. A despot. A tin-horn dictator. A goose-stepping, saber-rattling, cranky blowhard! *(He ends loudly and then realizes what he just said. There is a pause. He next speaks in a small, squeaky voice.)* Please don't kill me. . . .