



# *The Forest of Queens*

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Fable, Magic

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There was a fine prince  
Rattled with despair and woe  
So sad was he that flowers nearby  
Failed to grow.

His breath was poison gas  
His thoughts were ashes  
But never was there doubt  
That he was fine lass.

No matter the shine of the dawn  
Or the crisp warmth of dusk  
This prince wept rivers of tears  
As if to mourn.

He strolled through the gardens  
Seeing nothing but gloom  
Not the princesses who swooned  
Nor the buds that bloomed.

Then came a day when the king said in rage:  
“Enough of this sadness, this isn’t a stage!”

For your dull songs and those locks of beige!  
Lock him in a cage,  
Or leave this instant  
To a place so distant  
That I'll never see your sad face again,  
And in this stance I remain!"

There was a fine prince  
Rattled with despair and woe  
So sad was he, that even his father  
Became a foe.

In his sad state  
The prince left the gate  
Wondering why everything dark,  
Imprinted only him like a mark.  
Alone with every breath  
He wandered the streets  
He thought about death  
And slept with no sheets.

He walked in a daze,  
Feeling amazed  
Phased  
But sadly,  
Not erased.

Long past the dawn  
And long gone his crown,  
He trespassed unfamiliar lands  
Playing into thievery's hands.

Those bandits were cruel

And robbed him to the teeth  
Until there was a foul  
And he landed on his feet.

Horribly hurt, lying on the ground  
It was fate that intervened  
When a golden door  
He found.

Peeking from under the grass  
The door sparkled like brass  
And the prince didn't think twice  
Before escaping from the thieves' game of dice.

The world shifted and swirled  
The prince in mid-air twirled  
Then landed firm and kneeling  
In a place that sent his mind reeling.

So blinding was the light  
He had to shield his face  
From the divine sight  
Before observing the place.  
There was a fine prince  
Rattled with despair and woe  
But the beauty of a forest  
Caused his heart to flow.

The forest was like any other  
Leaves and tall trees they gather  
To share secrets and tales  
Until the sky pales.

The exception were the statues so fierce

Armed with weapons to pierce  
Some unknown enemy  
Moulded in the female anatomy.

Heart beating like lightning  
The prince approached the nearest, a frightening  
Scowl upon her stone lips  
A sword that slim fingers grip.

He turned to each one in awe  
Having a hard time finding a flaw  
Such precise and intricate garments  
They hardly seemed to be garden ornaments.

Finally in fair curiousness  
He lifted an arm to touch  
The stone woman  
Who trembled and morphed –  
The prince's palm touched flesh.

There was a fine prince  
Rattled with nothing but fear  
When the silver sword of a Queen  
His throat threatened to tear.

“Foolish male!  
You shall never live to tell the tale!”  
High her sword went into the air  
The prince tumbled  
Before a voice yelled “Beware!”

His palms brought another to life  
One who rescued him from his strife  
Gave him a chance,

And spoke in a calm voice:

“This is the Forest of Queens  
Where we once lived in flesh  
But after a tragic war that means  
We were forced to transform into stone  
To preserve our lives  
To escape our horrors.  
Never did we think a male would stumble by,  
Find the door and come to die.”

The was a fine prince  
Who always desired death  
But upon facing his end  
He didn't want it to be his last breath.

“I beg your forgiveness, it was a mistake  
I'll leave your forest, o queen,  
And from my mind erase  
The memory of ever entering.”

The pair of queens together judged his plea  
While the prince trembled  
Wondering whether to flee.

Then they rolled the dice  
And spoke to him like sour lime  
“If you step out of line,  
You will pay the price  
But for the time, remain  
And see what else you can do.”

The prince had never felt relief greater  
Than knowing he had another day of life so sweeter

He bowed to the two dames

And stated his name:

“I am Vihaan

Once a prince of plenty riches

Before I was banished by father

Now I am a visitor of many ditches.”

“Visitor of many ditches

These stone sculptures are my sisters,

I go by the name Parvati,

And the first statue you brought to flesh is Mamlambo.

Heal a third Queen, perhaps a fourth and fifth too,

And together, we'll narrate our story to you.”

So the prince did as per their wish.

He strolled through the forest of stone Queens

Touching each sculpture with a gentle kiss

Of his palm, they breathed life.

When the Forest of stone Queens

Pulsed with beating hearts

The Queen called Sif whispered

“There's one more left.”

They all moved aside to reveal

A single statue with the might of steel

She rode a horse on its hindquarters,

Paused in mid-battle.

The Queens all held their breath  
And gazed serenely as the prince  
Placed his palm on the last Queen  
Waiting for her fierce form to take flesh.

Nothing happened, stone stayed stone  
The prince frowned questioningly  
Before the others explained  
The befallen tragedy.

The Queen called Amunet said:  
“It is as we have thought  
She had chosen the wrong side  
Of the battle we had fought.”

“Centuries ago, our land lived in peace  
Men and women together did their duties  
To accomplish little tasks for their homes.”  
Began Queen Gaia.

“We had no ruler,  
No king to make our laws fuller  
There was ultimate balance among the genders  
And never did we think  
We would be left separated to fender.”

“Then came a day when a man thought too much  
He wanted to rule, and throw equality  
Into imbalance –”

“He thought too much, treated women  
As if we were lesser,” said Queen Al-lat.  
“Spread lies about how we were cursed,

Poisoned, evil, and sinners,  
He spread lies among the men to turn against us.  
And it worked.”

Queen Atua-anua said with a cry:  
“Soon we weren’t safe in our homes,  
Our husbands, brothers, sons, and fathers became  
Different beings and regarded their  
Queens as cleaners.”

“We fought a great battle  
We weren’t going to stay silent  
But the violence grew out of control  
And we were forced to flee one night.”

“The new King’s army charged after us,  
Millions against us,  
Thousands of our sisters died fighting  
Until the only women left were the ones you see now.”

“We were saved after four more sacrificed  
To carry a piece of Earth on their giant shoulders, their own lives  
One for each corner  
And raised high above the men’s  
Kingdom, far from their reach.”

“Our raised land held for years,  
But the King was vengeful.  
He never gave up the quest to  
Conquer the Queens who escaped.”

“He never gave up the quest,”  
Queen Izanami said with a tear,  
“He climbed and climbed until he reached

The sanctuary of Queens.”

At this point, the Queens became silent  
As if remembering the sounds of the  
Battle that ensued,  
As if recalling their unruly fate.  
Yet when the Prince saw smiles of victory  
Amidst their tears,  
He wondered aloud: “The King failed his quest.”

“Indeed he did,” said Queen Epona.  
“We felt obliged to teach him a lesson,  
Hence you found us here today  
Bound by stone where nothing could snatch  
Our dignity away.”

“When the King reached the peak of his climb  
The sight of us, still in stone, drove him insane,  
We stood right before him,  
But there was nothing he could do.”

“It drove him insane  
He banged his mind  
At our unbelievable audacity  
To sacrifice ourselves simply so he couldn’t control us.”

“It drove him insane,” said Parvati.  
“He slipped over the edge, falling from the height of clouds.  
To this day, he still falls, to insanity  
Crumpled to his knees.  
It drove him insane  
And in a way, that is a better punishment than death.”

There was a fine prince

Rattled with despair and shame

Ashamed of this King

Ashamed to be a male.

With a pit so hollow

All other eyes followed

The prince's gaze to the last Queen

Who never returned from stone.

“Turning to stone was blessing

And a curse, for we defeated Man

But only by a Man's touch could we ever

Be restored to flesh again.”

“She was unique, she fought a different battle alone.

While it was man against woman,

She fought the battle of Man and Woman,

She kept in her belief of balance

And thus is she bound forever by stone.”

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