

SLAYERS EAST SEASON TWO

Episode Four

The Folding Crown

A new face in town means changes are in store for the team. Meanwhile, Max is home alone, and something sinister is waiting in the wings.

In this episode, Cynth's sisters return from their road trip and suddenly Cynth has a lot of other things on her mind other than slaying. Also, the watcher Alison sent arrives and starts to make his presence felt.

Preparation for the episode:

WHAT HAS GONE BEFORE:

Max has been supplied with a copy of the 1924 edition of "The Folding Crown". He borrowed it from his drama teacher, who mentioned that it's about "two people who can't admit they like each other, and everyone dies as a result". Max has the idea – supplied, like all these circumstances, by Tremis – that if he can get Cynth to read the play with him, he'll know where she stands.

PRECREDITS:

A movie theatre, and a burly guy and his two cohorts buy tickets. They are met on the way to the entrance by Candy, who is not letting them get inside. These three are vampires. The leader is a very tough individual, who accuses Candy of "getting some spine. Fast as new kids coming into town, you're picking them off. Getting all aggressive, even a bit dangerous... the demons are furious. You better watch how far you push, little slayer, 'cause we are gonna push back."

(Stop this melee from ending in dusting of the vamps, if possible. The manager of the cinema will want to calm things down, and the vamps will want to get out of there. There are lots of witnesses, too.)

SCENE ONE:

Introduce Hubert. He arrives in town and gets onside with everyone through his sheer niceness. However, his attitude may be stifling to Candy, and Brian and Meryll may be concerned about where this leaves them.

SCENE TWO:

Cynth's sisters, Aggie and Chris, are back in town from their post-College road trip. Cynth hangs with them and when Max calls they bully her into revealing what's what with Max. (Max is setting up a gathering at his empty place, and he invites the following people: Candy, Zak, Cynth, Heather, Andrew and Christian. Aggie and Chris invite themselves.)

SCENE THREE:

Hub takes Candy through some routines and talks to her about the supernatural situation recently. He is extremely understanding, to the point of unctuousness. He insists that Candy go to Max's, saying it will be good for her.

SCENE FOUR:

Max's "party" begins. He has left the play on a table. It's a big house, and he generally wants people to scatter through it, giving him time to connect with Cynth. If Cynth brings Andrew, Max becomes paranoid about her affections and pushes this through as soon as possible.

SCENE FIVE:

Max gets Cynth to read through some of the play with him. He explains what is going on and has Cynth read the part of Song while he is Flight. This begins things...

SCENE SIX:

Hub visits Meryll and Brian while Candy is out and they take tea together and discuss their role.

SCENE SEVEN:

Chris becomes Fairness. She approaches, in turn, Aggie (Compassion), then Christian (Tact), then Brian (Obedience), then Hubert (Prudence). In each case, when she is near them she spouts a single line of dialogue, and the other Virtue replies. Also in each case, Flight and Song become whoever is nearest – Zak and Heather, Andrew and Candy, or Cynth and Max. The people do not realise they are enacting the play, and they do not realise they are speaking oddly. Except for when they are speaking the dialogue, they will not comprehend they are fulfilling the play.

(Fairly swiftly Max will catch on. Brian and Cheyne will be called in in time to be the latter virtues.)

When the five virtues are assembled, four will meet to plot the death of Fairness. They will cast her out of the building and summon the five plagues.

Note that flipping to the end of the play will not work. The play is performing them, not the other way around.

“SCENE” EIGHT:

The plagues come one at a time. Each of them will cause a real (anthropomorphic in some cases) threat to everyone, and the Virtue in particular. The target virtue will probably be overcome each time, and will fall into “the sleep of death” (a pallid sleep).

Between each of the plagues, the group have time to plan and research and respond.

The plagues, and the Virtues they kill, are: fever wind (Fairness), heat (Compassion), fog (Obedience), lightning (Tact), and blood rain (Prudence). For this last, the vampires will re-emerge if they survive.

Note that the book will not be easily vulnerable, and reading further through it is difficult but not impossible.

SCENE NINE:

The Virtues have fallen and only the attendants remain. Then Chris rises, taking on new and terrifying guise, wearing a red resin mask and a golden cloak, as the Regent Crimson. The Regent comes to kill whoever is Flight and Song – and there are six people in that situation.

Candy and co. are in for a fearsome fight, and if they haven't shifted the battleground, Max will have a great deal of explaining to do...

The Regent Crimson can only be made vulnerable by listening to the unspoken. Someone has to confess the secret. It could be Max, or Heather, or Andrew; or even Cynth or Zak. Probably not Candy.

Tremis will be nearby at the conclusion of events, and if the characters are alert they may uncover him and get a good look. He will, of course, get away however.

SCENE TEN:

Ideally, Cynth and Candy will argue here, setting up for the blow-up next episode.

TREMIS' INVOLVEMENT

Who: Max
Feeling: Attracted to Cynth
Problem: Cynth sends back mixed signals
Solution: Offered a tool to let him know her mind

Note:

Tremis' herb – St Aaron's Wort. Hardly found outside of Europe. Distinctive odor. Odor has also been present at doors slamming shut in previous episode, and Euan remembers it too.

THE FOLDING CROWN

Flight: Fate speaks, the Unspoken shall destroy me
And the Spoken shall destroy you.
Song: We are doomed then from the damned birth of thought.
- Act 2, Scene 3

History:

“The Folding Crown” is a playscript by Robert Blackwood. It was first published in a run of 150 in 1885, and republished in 1924 in a run of 3000 copies. The 1924 print run was recalled, and records show more than eighty percent of copies were destroyed. The 1924 edition made some substantial changes to the content of the play, based on Blackwood’s notes; these are detailed below.

The only review of the play was printed in the *London Crier* in early 1886. It was written in a tone of outrage: “This morally scandalous play should not be performed. There are enough entreaties to despicable character abroad in society, and this may be the most ruinous of all.”

In 1937 the Boston Society of Players announced the play’s first mounting, but auditions were never held. Three years later a fire destroyed the backstage area of their Playhouse, and any copies of the play in their possession were destroyed. Blackwood was manipulated into madness by Tremis.

The Play:

A two-act play, *The Folding Crown* tells of the rulers of the City-State of Cretia, a fictional city alongside the fabled Lake of Light.

The rulers of Cretia are five beings who together make up the “Folding Crown”, or the royalty. Each ruler represents, and is titled, one of the Five Precious Virtues of Cretia: Sister Prudence, Brother Tact, Brother Obedience, Sister Compassion, and the youngest of the virtues, Child Fairness. Serving as messengers and aides are the Virtues’ two attendants, Flight (male) and Song (female).

In Act One, we meet Fairness and the *Folding Crown*’s attendants Flight and Song. Fairness seeks to know the truth of a situation, but Flight and Song say the other virtues have forbade it. Fairness then approaches each of the other Virtues in turn and pleads for knowledge, but each Virtue answers that the truth should not be known, for that is the virtuous thing to do. Fairness appeals to the justice of it, but each Virtue places justice on a lower plane than their own concerns.

As this proceeds, Flight and Song are called aside by each Virtue in turn, and given various messages to carry. A complicated set of schemes are implied as the Virtues jockey with each other. As Flight and Song proceed, they suggest that the other Virtues should meet to discuss how to deal with the inquisitive Fairness. This meeting is called and at a crucial point Fairness stumbles in upon it. The other Virtues accuse Fairness of being a tool of another force, which Fairness denies. They quickly expel Fairness, and then decide to end Fairness’ intrusion in events by bringing down the plagues.

Act Two depicts Cretia falling victim to the five plagues, one at a time. The Virtues cannot still what they have wrought, however, and while the first throws Fairness into the sleep near death, each subsequent plague afflicts another of the Virtues. As this disaster falls, the four work feverishly against each other to shore up their own positions, and Flight and Song are very busy delivering messages and performing simple tasks. The plagues, and the Virtues they kill, are: fever wind (Fairness), heat (Compassion), fog (Obedience), lightning (Tact), and blood rain (Prudence). Finally only the attendants remain. They are witness to the arrival of the Regent Crimson to claim the Folded Crown and rulership of Cretia. The Regent Crimson is to be played by the same performer who was Fairness in new garb, although the play is silent on the meaning of this directive. The Regent, who is silent, moves to kill Flight and Song, and they know that they can end his power and restore the virtues by acknowledging that which never was acknowledged. However, Flight and Song cannot convince each other to speak what is hidden. They cannot be unvirtuous, and so they die at the Regents' hands.

It is accepted by scholars that the author's intention was that the hidden truth was of the love Flight has for Song, although this is never actually acknowledged.

The Theme:

The play was an attack on the moral hypocrisy of the Victorian age. The virtue of Fairness is intended to be the most sympathetic of the Virtues, being the voice of reason and common sense; while the other virtues listen to Fairness, they rarely listen to its advice, and when fairness brings the other virtues to uncomfortable territory they are quick to sacrifice it, and in a short-sighted manner. The Regent Crimson which finally takes the Folded Crown represents ultimate self-knowledge.

Each of the virtues was intended as a satiric caricature of a prominent figure of the day.

Physical description:

The 1895 edition was bound in pictorial green cloth, and the front and spine panels were stamped in brown. There was no inserted frontispiece, page 118 was blank, the sheets bulked 1.5 cm, and a lizard or salamander design appeared on the front cover. The 1924 edition was bound in yellow cloth with no design on the front cover. The frontispiece showed the author.

The Play as a Mystical Entity:

The play is something of a spell. Readers rarely reach the end of the first Act before they find themselves unable to continue. Those who do may trigger the beginnings of a spell that brings the second act to life.

The first act, depicting the disputes between the different virtues, can be used as a divining tool. It taps into a very powerful psychic space that forces people to reveal themselves into and through the text.

Flight: Fate speaks, the Unspoken shall destroy me
And the Spoken shall destroy you.
Song: We are doomed then from the damned birth of thought.
- *Act 2, Scene 3*

Fairness: So he that wears the Crown can Judge
Let all that is unknown be known.
- *Act 1, Scene 5*

Obedience: That crushed herb, its scent
betrays your master
Fairness: No! I have no master.
Prudence: Then he is your puppeteer.
- *Act 1, Scene 5*

Flight: Five plagues to fell five virtues.
Song: And then the Regent Crimson comes.
- *Act 1, Scene 2*

Fairness: Obedience, I bid thee well,
And beg of you a service.
There is a truth unspoken here.
Why must we bow to silence?
- *Act 1, Scene 4*