



CORNELIA FUNKE

Translated from the German by Anna Schmitt Funke



2 PALMER STREET, FROME, SOMERSET BA11 1DS

For Ben

Who explained to me that there is only one art that has always existed.

And for Anna

Who helped to tell this story right.

First published in Germany by Dressler Verlag GmbH 2023

Original text © Cornelia Funke 2023

English translation © Cornelia Funke 2024

First published in Great Britain in 2024

Chicken House

2 Palmer Street

Frome, Somerset BA11 1DS

United Kingdom

www.chickenhousebooks.com

Chicken House/Scholastic Ireland, 89E Lagan Road, Dublin Industrial Estate,
Glasnevin, Dublin D11 HP5F, Republic of Ireland

Cornelia Funke has asserted her right under the Copyright, Designs and
Patents Act 1988 to be identified as the author of this work.

All rights reserved.

No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted or utilized in
any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying or
otherwise, without the prior permission of the publisher.

This book is a work of fiction. Names, characters, businesses, organizations,
places, events and incidents are either the product of the author's imagination
or used in a fictitious manner. Any resemblance to actual persons,
living or dead, events or locales is purely coincidental.

Translated by Anna Schmitt Funke

Cover design by Steve Wells

Cover illustration © Karl James Mountford

Inside illustrations © Cornelia Funke

Typeset by Dorchester Typesetting Group Ltd

Printed in Great Britain by Clays, Elcograf S.p.A



1 3 5 7 9 10 8 6 4 2

British Library Cataloguing in Publication data available.

HB ISBN 978-1-913696-18-4

PB ISBN 978-1-915947-61-1

eISBN 978-1-915947-59-8



Who's Who in the Inkworld

Adderhead

Cruel prince in the Inkworld;
Violante's father.

Aquamarine

Replaces Ironstone as Orpheus's
glass man.

Ayesha

Prisoner of the Shadow Reader;
Hyvin's sister.

Balbulus of Cipressa

Violante's illuminator in Ombra
Castle; also known as the Great
Balbulus.

Baldassare Rinaldi

Failed troubadour and assassin.

Battista

One of the Motley Folk; actor,
mask-maker, trusted friend of the
Black Prince.

Bear

Constant companion of the Black
Prince.

Black Prince

Nyame; king of the Motley Folk,
leader of the robbers; friend of
Dustfinger since childhood.

Bluejay

Legendary robber, invented by
Fenoglio; part played by Mo.

Brianna

Daughter of Dustfinger and Roxane;
Violante's maid.

Castle of Night

Castle of the Adderhead.

Cimara

Wine merchant in Grunico.

Civetta

One of the good Women of the
Woods; takes the shape of an owl.

Cosimo the Fair

Husband of Violante, lover of
Brianna; killed in battle with the
Adderhead's army.

Dante

Young son of Mo and Resa
Folchart.



Darius

Elinor's librarian.

Donatella

One of Violante's maids.

Doria

Meggie's partner; younger brother of the Strong Man.

Dustfinger

Nardo, the Fire-Dancer; fire-eater, wanderer between worlds; husband of Roxane, father of Brianna.

Elinor Loredan

Resa's aunt, Meggie's great-aunt.

Enrico Scappato

Orpheus's real name.

Farid

Dustfinger's pupil; accidentally read out of *A Thousand and One Nights*.

Fenoglio

The Inkweaver; author of *Inkheart* and inventor of the Inkworld.

Fire-Dancer

See *Dustfinger*.

Four-Eyes

See *Orpheus*.

Giovanna

Pupil of the Shadow Reader.

Grappa

Orpheus's guard; son of Luca Buratti.

Grunico

City in the north, where Orpheus lives.

Gwin

Dustfinger's horned marten.

Haniah

Nyame's little sister, who died as a child.

Her Ugliness

See *Violante*.

Hyvin

Sister of Ayesha.

Inkweaver

See *Fenoglio*.

Ironstone

Orpheus's glass man.



Jacopo

Son of Violante and Cosimo the Fair; grandson of the Adderhead.

Jasper

Mo's glass man.

Jehan

Goldsmith; Roxane's son, Dustfinger's stepson.

Lazaro

The Strong Man; older brother of Doria.

Lilia

Friend of Jehan, raised by the Women of the Woods.

Luca Buratti

Grappa's father; butcher.

Meggie

Daughter of Mo and Resa Folchart, partner of Doria; silver tongue.

Mia

Volpe's daughter.

Minerva

Fenoglio's landlady.

Mo

Mortimer Folchart; bookbinder, Resa's husband, Meggie's father; also known as Silvertongue and formerly as the Bluejay.

Mortimer Folchart

See *Mo*.

Moss-women

Healers.

Nardo

First name of Dustfinger.

Nyame

First name of the Black Prince.

Ombra

Town in the Inkworld ruled by Violante.

Orpheus Gemelli

Writer and reader; born Enrico Scappato.

Prince

See *Black Prince*.

Rabbia

The Shadow Reader.

Resa

Teresa Folchart; Mo's wife, Meggie's mother.



Rinaldi

See *Baldassare Rinaldi*.

Rosenquartz

Fenoglio's glass man.

Rosetta

One of Violante's maids.

Rospo

One of the good Women of the Woods; takes the shape of a toad.

Roxane

Dustfinger's wife; healer; formerly one of the Motley Folk.

Rudolf

Orpheus's servant.

Serafina Cavole

One of Orpheus's students.

Shadow Reader

One of the evil Women of the Woods; draws her magic from the shadows of the world.

Silvertongue

See *Mo*.

Strong Man

Lazaro, older brother of Doria; one of the Black Prince's most loyal companions.

Taddeo

Violante's librarian.

Violante

Ruler of Ombra; daughter of the Adderhead, widow of Cosimo the Fair, mother of Jacopo; formerly known as Her Ugliness.

Volpe

One of the good Women in the Woods; takes the shape of a fox.

White Women

Handmaidens of Death.

Women of the Woods

Women who shapeshift and do magic.

The Story So Far

The events that lead up to this story fill more than 1,500 book pages. For a long time I racked my brains about how to summarize them on one double page to help the reader return to the Inkworld. *Why not just refer them to the internet, Cornelia?* I asked myself. *There are plenty of summaries there.* But then Dustfinger brought me two tightly written pages of parchment that his stepson Jehan had discovered in Orpheus's desk.

They delivered exactly what I was looking for: a summary of the events that led to those in this book. Of course, Orpheus describes them from his point of view, so I advise reading them with caution. Nevertheless, I think that the following will help to understand how the events described in *The Colour of Revenge* came about.

So, here you are . . .

I, Orpheus Gemelli, am not from the Inkworld. But I have done great things in it, even if my enemies have done everything in their power to ensure that my achievements

are lost from memory. Curse them, them and their lies!

Here is what really happened.

It all began with Dustfinger, also known as the Fire-Dancer, being read out of his world against his will. Oh yes, that is possible. The bookbinder Mortimer Folchart did it, the man who is also known in Ombra as the Bluejay. Mortimer does not like to admit this, but he is a silver tongue. I know, because I have the same gift. We can bring words to life with our voice. Unlike me, Mortimer never used his gift to its full potential. He lost his wife by accidentally reading her into the Inkworld, and Dustfinger spent more than ten years in the wrong world because Mortimer simply could not manage to read him back home.

The man who finally accomplished this was I, Orpheus Gemelli.

The only one who ever truly deserved to bear the title of Silvertongue.

Long before I met him on a lonely country road in a different world, I knew Dustfinger because I had read about him in *Inkheart*, a book written by a man named Fenoglio. In Ombra Fenoglio goes by the name Inkweaver. His own words brought him here, and he uses his gift for writing to bring useless princes like Cosimo the Fair back from the dead, and to allow giants to stomp down from the mountains. Fenoglio is an old man without a conscience, whose words cause nothing but calamity. But I didn't know that when I read his book. *Inkheart* is about Dustfinger, the Fire-Dancer. It didn't tell me that he is a liar and a traitor. I made Dustfinger the hero of my childhood.

My heart raced when he stood before me one day in flesh and blood, begging me to send him home with my silver tongue. Home to the world described in Fenoglio's book, back to his wife and his daughters.

Oh, I was such a fool! I trusted him. I believed he was my friend, because I had read about him. It's true that I did accept a small sum as payment for my services. So? I granted his most ardent desire. Thanks to me, he is now celebrated in all of Ombra for his fire play. Thanks to me, he has his beautiful wife back. But does he thank me for it? Not a bit of it.

Dustfinger rejected my friendship. He preferred to give it to a scruffy boy called Farid, whom Mortimer read out of an Arabian fairy tale. Dustfinger taught the devious little thief everything he knows about fire. He even died for the boy! And who was it who brought him back from the dead?

I, Orpheus.

But not even that made me worthy of his friendship. On the contrary; Dustfinger told the whole world that it was Mortimer who was his saviour!

Mortimer, the bookbinder, who also only ended up in Ombra thanks to my gifts as a reader, then donned a mask of feathers and played at being a noble robber! The Bluejay! Pah! He is still nothing but a bookbinder, even if he did once trade in his tools for a sword.

Dustfinger granted him the friendship that he denied me, the man who brought him home, the man who summoned him back from the dead!

Betrayal and *ingratitude*. They should all have those two words tattooed on their foreheads: Dustfinger, Mortimer

and Fenoglio, whose words made a fool of me one too many times.

And they had many helpers: Mortimer's daughter, Meggie, who regrettably inherited his silver tongue; his wife, Resa, who grew wings just to fight me at the Castle in the Lake; her aunt, Elinor, who always swore at me so rudely while I was a guest in her house; and Darius, Elinor's shrivelled little librarian, who is also rumoured to be a silver tongue. What a congregation of liars and traitors! They all joined forces against me when I found well-deserved fame and fortune in this world – despite my voice being the very thing that brought them here!

Even Dustfinger's wife, Roxane, and his daughter, Brianna, regarded me with nothing but disdain, although it was I who returned husband and father to them.

Betrayal.

Ingratitude.

They would not even allow Orpheus Gemelli to enjoy the patronage of the Adderhead, a prince who appreciated my gifts more than they did. Back then I dreamt of writing the future of this world, with Dustfinger as its hero. I was still willing to forgive him. But what did he do? Together with Mortimer and the Black Prince, Dustfinger's childhood friend, he brought down the Adderhead with his fire.

'Orpheus remembers!' I call to them. 'Even if you tell this world a different story.'

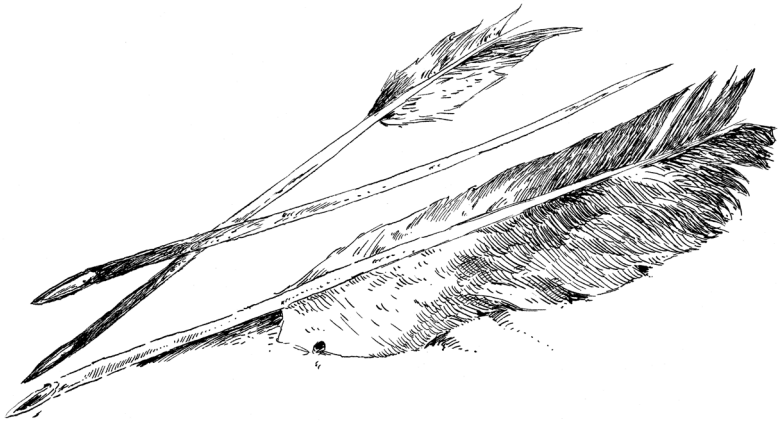
They put Violante, the Adderhead's ugly daughter, on Ombra's throne. And I had to steal away like a thief in the night and leave behind everything I had – wealth and influence, even my voice and the power it gave me over

THE STORY SO FAR

words. I lost everything. While Dustfinger and his oh-so-noble friends celebrated their victory and returned to a peaceful life in Ombra.

But I will have my revenge. And the story will be told as Orpheus writes it.

Orpheus Gemelli





Shadows of Flame

Who'd be happy, let him be so:

Nothing's sure about tomorrow.

Lorenzo de' Medici

The world was black. It was night in Ombra. Only the castle walls were tinted red. On the battlements, burning shadows stood guard amongst soldiers of flesh and blood. They were there between the archways, and in the square where the living had gathered, flames taking the shapes of women, men and children. The inhabitants of Ombra had lived in peace for more than five years now. But on this cool September night they remembered all those who had given their lives for this peace. And, every year on this date, Dustfinger gave those they had lost bodies of flame.

Fire-Dancer. Dustfinger heard the crowd murmuring the name they had given him, the low voices filled with gratitude. Through him, the fire not only summoned Ombra's dead once a year; it illuminated the city's narrow streets at night, it warmed the houses in winter, and, when

Dustfinger made the flames dance and play with him, it brought joy. The fire delivered his thanks for all the happiness Ombra had granted him.

Violante, the ruler who had kept and protected Ombra's peace, stood on the balcony of the castle. From here she had announced both good and terrible news in the years of her reign. Her subjects no longer referred to her as 'Her Ugliness'. 'Violante the Brave' they called her, sometimes even 'the Kind'. Violante usually wore black, but tonight her dress was white, for that was the colour of mourning in Ombra.

Dustfinger's daughter stood, as always, by Violante's side. Brianna had inherited her father's fiery hair, but otherwise she resembled her mother. When Roxane stepped out of the waiting crowd and bowed her head before Violante, Brianna's face blushed with love and pride. Roxane's long hair had turned grey with the years, and, instead of wearing it loose, she usually wore it in a braid now. But in Dustfinger's eyes the years had only made his wife more beautiful. The crowd fell silent when Roxane began to sing. Her audience had done the same the night that Dustfinger had heard her sing for the very first time – in a much darker, grander castle, in front of princes and rich merchants. Her voice had even distracted them from her beauty.

The fire traced Roxane's shadow on the walls as she sang of all those Ombra had lost. Her voice filled the courtyard with the longing for them, with memories of their laughter and tears, and just for one night – like Dustfinger's fire – her song brought them back to life.

Lost and found . . .

Dustfinger let his gaze wander over the crowd.

So many faces. So many stories.

Not all of them were interwoven with his own, but some had changed the fabric of his life for ever. There was Fenoglio, whose words had brought him such misfortune, with his little glass man, Rosenquartz, who had sharpened his quills for many years, sitting on his shoulder. The little boy who clung to Fenoglio's hand was Dante, the son of Mortimer and Resa Folchart. Resa smiled at Dustfinger when their eyes met. Their stories had often intertwined, in this world as well as in another, and they shared memories darker than the sky above them. Her husband was the best bookbinder in Ombra, but nobody had forgotten that Mortimer used to wear the mask of the Bluejay, the legendary robber. Or that he had once sacrificed his own freedom in exchange for the lives of Ombra's children.

Stories . . .

Mortimer Folchart looked over at Dustfinger as if he had heard his thoughts. Mortimer's voice had a different magic from Roxane's, but luckily he had stopped making use of it many years ago. No one in Ombra knew that he and Resa, like Fenoglio, came from another world. No one except Dustfinger.

No. He didn't want to think of that tonight: all the years in the wrong world, the all-consuming longing . . . *You are here, Dustfinger*, he reminded himself, as his eyes drifted from Roxane back to Brianna. *You have what you longed for: your wife, your daughter, and the world that you love.* Why, then, did he still feel the old restlessness that had haunted his youth? 'You want to pack up and leave again, don't you?' Roxane had asked him just yesterday,

only half in jest. *Sing, sing, Roxane!* Dustfinger thought. *Just sing away the restlessness of my foolish heart.*

Her voice filled the night not only with the pain of losing the ones you love, but also with the certainty that love was always worth the pain. That was certainly what Meggie, Mortimer's daughter, felt at this moment. She was no longer a girl but a young woman, and all of Ombra loved Doria, to whom she had given her heart. How could one resist a boy who built wings from wood and linen and used them to fly off the city walls?

Roxane's voice faded away and Dustfinger's figures of flame turned into fiery pollen that the wind carried up into the night sky.

'Your wife's voice gets more beautiful each year, but your fire was not bad either.' A warm hand settled on his shoulder. The cloak that the Black Prince wore was so blue that it made Dustfinger think of a deep lake or a dark summer sky. Nyame loved blue. Blue and gold had always been his colours, long before people had started calling him the Black Prince.

Violante waved at the crowd one last time, before she disappeared into her chambers and the castle grounds began to empty. It was a cold night without the fire.

'Where is your marten? Is your settled life boring Gwin?' Nyame gave Dustfinger a knowing smile. They had been friends for so long that nobody knew better how much the marten embodied Dustfinger's restlessness. The last years had not brought peace for the Black Prince. There was always a nobleman somewhere mistreating his subjects. And, whenever Nyame allowed himself a few days' rest in the camp of the Motley Folk, a deputation of desperate

farmers was sure to show up, entreating him for help.

'Right there! Are you blind? There, behind the gate!' Rosenquartz's shrill voice cut through the night. 'There!' The glass man almost fell off Fenoglio's shoulder, pointing his pale red finger at the castle gates, where the people streamed past the guards.

'Nonsense!' Fenoglio snapped. 'It was some other glass man. Just calm down. You are going to make yourself burst one day, getting overexcited about every figment of your imagination!'

'My imagination?' squealed Rosenquartz with his reedy voice. 'It was Ironstone, I'm sure of it. And have you forgotten whom he served? Orpheus!'

Dustfinger thought he could feel his heart turn to ice.

Orpheus.

No. He was dead, or far, far away.

'Enough!' Fenoglio grumbled, annoyed. 'Was Orpheus with him? No. There you are!'

'So?' Rosenquartz whined. 'That doesn't prove anything. He was sitting on the shoulder of a fellow who didn't look trustworthy in the least!'

'I said, enough!' Fenoglio snapped again. 'I'm cold, and I'm sure Minerva has already heated up the delicious soup she made this morning.'

So saying, he joined the crowd that was jostling out of the castle gates.

Dustfinger, however, stood there, staring at every shoulder for a grey-limbed glass man. How painfully fast his heart was beating. Painfully fast. Just one mention of that name had brought back all the old fear: Orpheus.

What if Rosenquartz was right? What if not only the

glass man but Orpheus himself was in Ombra? Was he already sitting in some chamber, writing words that would once again rob the Fire-Dancer of everything he loved?

‘What?’ Nyame wrapped his arm around Dustfinger’s shoulder. ‘Don’t look so worried! Even if it was Orpheus’s glass man, you heard what Rosenquartz said: he has a new master now! Do you seriously believe that we wouldn’t have heard anything from Orpheus for all these years if he was still alive?’

He really did not sound worried.

But the memories came back to Dustfinger, whether he wanted them to or not. A face, red with rage, like that of a hurt boy, pale blue eyes behind round lenses, devious despite their apparent innocence. And then the voice, so full and beautiful, which had brought him back here from the wrong world: *You ranged yourself on the bookbinder’s side, although he snatched you out of your own story, instead of backing me, the man who brought you home! That was cruel, very cruel.*

Violante’s guards bolted the castle gates for the night, and the people who had gathered to honour the dead disappeared into the alleyways of the city. Did one of them carry the glass man who could tell him whether his master still lived?

Go, Dustfinger. Look for him!

Roxane had joined the other motley women. They wanted to meet at the camp down by the river. But Dustfinger still heard the velvet voice in his head, the one he first heard in another world: *My black dog is guarding your daughter. I expect she’s terribly afraid. But I’ve ordered my dog not to feast on her sweet flesh and soul . . . just yet.*

The horrors of the past were so much more powerful than the fiery shadows he had summoned tonight.

‘Nardo! Are you coming?’ Nyame called, looking back at Dustfinger.

In their youth they had taken the fact that their names started with the same letter as proof that their friendship was predestined. Why had he never told Nyame – or Roxane – the truth? About the book and the other world, about all those terrible lost years and the man whose voice had brought him back here? Had life not taught him often enough how lonely keeping secrets made you?

You don't understand, Nyame! he wanted to cry out. *There is a book that tells our story. And Orpheus came to this world only because of that book.*

But Dustfinger remained silent, as he had all the years since his return. The glass man must be wrong. Orpheus was dead. Or back in his world, where the Fire-Dancer and the Black Prince were nothing but heroes of a made-up story.

