

= Mother Gothel =

Mother Gothel is a fictional character who appears in Walt Disney Pictures ' 50th animated feature film Tangled (2010) as the main antagonist . The character is voiced by American actress and singer Donna Murphy in her voice @-@ acting debut , prior to which she was predominantly known as a stage actress . Upon learning from her agent that Disney was auditioning potentials for the antagonistic role of Mother Gothel , Murphy decided to audition for the part spontaneously . Loosely based on the witch character in the German fairy tale " Rapunzel " , Mother Gothel is a vain old witch who hoards the healing powers of a magical flower in order to remain young and beautiful forever . When the flower is suddenly harvested by the kingdom in order to heal its ailing queen , its rejuvenating powers are inherited by the king and the queen 's daughter , Princess Rapunzel , stripping Gothel of her access to it . With her life suddenly endangered , Gothel kidnaps the baby , imprisoning the young Princess Rapunzel in an isolated tower for eighteen years while masquerading as her mother .

Inspired by the Evil Queen in Disney 's Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs (1937) and Lady Tremaine in Disney 's Cinderella (1950) , Gothel was developed by directors Nathan Greno and Byron Howard into a much more complex villain than the fairy tale witch upon whom she is based because the character is forced to rely solely on her wit , charisma and intelligence as opposed to sorcery in order to survive . The film 's most difficult character to develop , Gothel 's exotic appearance , whose beauty , dark curly hair and voluptuous figure were deliberately drawn to serve as a foil to Rapunzel 's , was inspired by both Murphy and American singer Cher .

Mother Gothel has been mostly well received by film critics , who enjoyed the character 's humor , complexity , charisma and showmanship , dubbing her a scene stealer , while praising Murphy 's performance enthusiastically . However , some critics felt that Gothel was simply too passive ? a weaker , less intimidating Disney villainess than Maleficent from Sleeping Beauty (1959) , Cruella de Vil from One Hundred and One Dalmatians and Ursula from The Little Mermaid (1989) .

= = Development = =

= = = Conception = = =

Walt Disney himself first attempted to adapt the fairy tale " Rapunzel " into a feature @-@ length animated film during the 1940s . However , the filmmaker 's efforts were never fully realized because the fairy tale was considered too " small " . In 2008 , co @-@ directors Nathan Greno and Byron Howard decided to enlarge the film 's scale in order to transform it into a " big event " in order for it to be successful . Meanwhile , the character Mother Gothel was developed into a much more complex villain than the witch upon whom she is based , conceiving her as " a very lonely woman who really did not know how to have a relationship of any kind " . Little else had been determined about the character at the time , who was simply described as " the type of woman who ... envisioned herself in the spotlight . " A departure from traditional Disney villains , Mother Gothel is not a witch or a sorceress . Because she lacks supernatural powers , the character is forced to rely solely on her wit , charm , intellect and charisma because , a conscious decision made by Greno and Howard . However , in the Brothers Grimm 's original fairy tale , Gothel is very much depicted as a typical witch @-@ like character , an idea that was modified for the Disney film adaptation in favor of having Gothel 's agelessness instead be " derive [d] ... from Rapunzel 's hair " , becoming one of the few Disney villainesses to not possess magical powers of her own .

Seeking inspiration for Gothel and Rapunzel 's " bizarre " relationship , Greno and Howard conducted a series of interviews with several female Disney employees , asking them to list qualities in their mothers that " they found annoying and cloying or restricting " , specifically " the things that they ? re [sic] mothers would do that made them feel trapped or made them feel smothered " in order to make the villain appear more relatable . Gothel 's " Mother Knows Best " line " Getting kind of chubby " was in fact borrowed from one of these interviews . Gothel embodies " the darker side "

of overprotective parents ; at the beginning of the film , Gothel and Rapunzel 's relationship resembles more @-@ so of " a pure mother @-@ daughter relationship . " Elaborating on Gothel 's " unique mothering style " , Howard explained to Den of Geek that the character " has to convince this smart girl that she is her mother ... whatever her motivations are . " Citing Gothel as one of the film 's most difficult characters to develop as a result of her complex relationship with Rapunzel , Greno explained to Den of Geek :

" Mother Gothel can 't be mean . She has to be very passive @-@ aggressive . She was one of the hardest characters to crack . When we were developing her , people were saying that she doesn 't feel enough like a villain , and people would point to characters like Ursula . And then she was too dark for a while ... Because what you do with her directly affects how you play Rapunzel in the movie . Because , if you play an extremely dominant and cruel villain , that girl is going to become meek and downtrodden , with almost nothing of a person , with low self @-@ esteem . And we knew we didn 't want a character like that ... We had to balance it out , and figured that Gothel has to be more subtle than that , rather than a one @-@ note , domineering mother . "

The St. Paul Pioneer Press observed that Gothel represents " an update " of the traditional wicked stepmother , evolving into " the passive @-@ aggressive stepmother " instead . In actress Donna Murphy 's opinion , a " classic " villainess is " somebody who wants something with such intensity and such great need but comes to a place of not being bound by any kind of moral code or any sense of what ? s ethical " , concluding that " They will do anything to get what they want " . The Austin Chronicle observed that the directors ' inclusion of Gothel as " an evil mother figure as a trigger for the storyline " remains one of the " classic hallmarks of Disney animation " . According to Kay Turner , author of the book Transgressive Tales : Queering the Grimms , " Gothel " means " godmother " in German .

= = = Voice = = =

The directors admitted that they were not keen on hiring solely big @-@ named , A @-@ list celebrities or top @-@ billed actors to voice the film 's main characters . Howard explained that , in order to be cast , the actors simply had to have the " right voice " for the characters , preferring voice actors " who could ... bring a natural ease to those characters . " Greno elaborated , " It was never about how big the star was ... It was always about ... who ? s best for the part " . Film critic James Berardinelli of ReelViews observed that this decision echoed " Disney 's approach during the late 1980s and early 1990s , when big name stars where often bypassed in favor of lesser known talents . " An additional asset was that the actor be able to perform well both independently and collaboratively .

Mother Gothel is voiced by American actress and singer Donna Murphy , a Tony Award @-@ winning Broadway actress who was informed about the casting call for Tangled by her agent . Having never voiced an animated character before , the actress decided to audition for the role of the film 's villain based solely on the expectation that the unfamiliar experience would be " fun " . Almost immediately , Murphy developed a strong liking towards Gothel because of the character 's complexity . Known for her award @-@ winning Broadway performances , Murphy prepared herself for her Tangled audition similar to the way in which the actress would have prepared for a Broadway audition . Refusing to rely solely on her voice , Murphy also provided Gothel with an additional background that " flush [ed] out the moments beyond what we see in the film . " Although Greno and Howard had already held Murphy in high regard as " a spectacular singer " , the actress was required to audition a song for the directors nonetheless , performing " Children Will Listen " from the musical Into the Woods . Howard revealed in an interview that Murphy was ultimately chosen out of hundreds of actresses because she possessed " something extra " ; the directors especially enjoyed the charisma and intelligence Murphy brought to the role .

Growing up a fan of Disney films , Murphy had never wanted to play a princess , preferring characters who were adventurous and " drove the action " instead . In the actress ' opinion , villains continue to be the most dynamic characters in Disney films . Describing the opportunity to voice a Disney villain as a " juicy " experience , Murphy explained that this is because these characters are "

not bound by ethics or moral codes or concern for what someone thinks or how it might hurt someone else " , providing actors with more freedom . Upon her first session , Murphy appreciated the directors for exposing her to early concepts and ideas about Gothel . However , Murphy was not provided with a complete script because " They ? re very protective about that . " Murphy was directed to lower the pitch of her voice in favor of demonstrating a rather " flat " sound . Although Murphy did not base her own performance on any one individual in particular , she admitted to Babble that she was somewhat inspired by Betty Lou Gerson 's performance as Cruella de Vil in Disney 's One Hundred and One Dalmatians (1961) . Comparing voice acting to Broadway , Murphy commented that , in animation , " You ? re recording and you ? re discovering it and giving the performance all at the same time . It ? s not like you have three weeks rehearsal . " Additionally , Murphy never worked with co @-@ star Mandy Moore , voice of Rapunzel ; instead , Murphy revealed that scenes with Gothel and Rapunzel were actually recorded opposite one of the directors impersonating Moore , who also explained to Murphy that Gothel 's design will continue to evolve as the character begins to adapt the actress ' mannerisms . Howard enthused that Murphy " nailed " Gothel , admitting to ultimately using 90 % of the actress ' original material and takes because " The character just came right to life when she came in . "

= = = Characterization , design and analysis = = =

Convinced that " Disney does villains better than anyone , " the directors felt pressured to create a villain who would ultimately " live up to the classic villains of [Disney 's] past films . " Greno and Howard wanted Gothel to be both a funny and frightening character , describing her as " a commanding and powerful presence ... who could also have warmth " . Greno believes that Gothel is particularly scary because she is not a witch , explaining , " She 's a real @-@ world @-@ type villain . " Considered " one of the [film 's] hardest characters to crack " by Greno , he and Howard wanted Gothel to be depicted as a conniving villain who is likeable and charismatic enough that audiences would be convinced by her and Rapunzel 's unconventional relationship . Greno explained , " if Mother Gothel was a mean villainess , and looked like a villainess and acted scary , you 'd be like , ' Why is Rapunzel staying in the tower ? ' " In early drafts , Gothel was inspired by Ursula from The Little Mermaid (1989) , causing the character to become " too dark . " Ultimately , the filmmakers voted in favor of having Gothel be subtle as opposed to having her remain " a one @-@ note , domineering mother , " similar to Lady Tremaine from Disney 's Cinderella (1950) .

As reported by The Korea Times , the thought of Gothel being a villain who is both a " greedy , selfish woman and a mother figure to Rapunzel " was initially " perplexing " for animator Jin Kim , and it wasn 't until after Kim heard Gothel 's " Mother Knows Best " for the first time that he " came up with the 1940s Hollywood screen siren motif " for the character . The directors also strived to make it obvious that Mother Gothel and Rapunzel are not related . Greno told Animation World Network , " When they 're standing together , it is very clear that this is not a mother and daughter , just by the frames of their bodies , their hair , the pigments of their skin , " as opposed to when Rapunzel is in close proximity with her true parents , the King and Queen . Howard added that , in comparison to Rapunzel , " Gothel is very tall and curvy , she ? s very voluptuous , she ? s got this very exotic look to her . Even down to that curly hair , we ? re trying to say visually that this is not this girl ? s mother . " The animators studied footage of Murphy in order to get " ideas about facial expressions " and " gestures . " After much speculation , the directors finally admitted that , in addition to Murphy , Gothel 's physical appearance was in fact influenced by American singer Cher . Howard explained that this was " because Cher is very exotic and Gothic looking , " continuing that the singer " definitely was one of the people we looked at visually , as far as what gives you a striking character . "

The term passive @-@ aggressive has since gone on to be commonly associated with Gothel . Critics felt that Gothel could possibly pioneer " a new kind of Disney villainess , " introducing " the undermining , passive @-@ aggressive , guilt @-@ trip @-@ inducing witch . " The Village Voice wrote that , as a villain , Gothel " is Disney ? s first villainess whose chief crime is being an underminer , " warning Rapunzel that she is simply " too silly , too uneducated , too unsophisticated

" to survive life outside of the tower . The Los Angeles Times referred to Gothel as " A guilt @-@ tripping , overprotective , super @-@ manipulative parent from hell . " One film critic observed that " Gothel is one of the most understated villains Disney has used in a long time . She harkens back to the wicked step mother idea in Cinderella ... She proves it 's possible to be evil without all the theatrics . " The author continued , " Gothel is one for the ages with a bit of darkly comedic timing and the overall greed and menace a villain needs to be disdained . " The character has received comparisons to the Evil Queen from Disney 's Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs (1937) .

Donna Murphy believed that Gothel did really love Rapunzel in her own way .

" I also think there is this thread of a kind of love that she does have for Rapunzel . It ? s not what she set out . But she does raise this child and it ? s the most intimate and certainly the most sustained relationship I think the woman has had in her 387 years or however old she might be . So as deep as the need is to get something for herself , she can ? t help but fall in love with her . She ? s spirited , creative , and charming and I think that stirs something in her that is confusing for Gothel . And Gothel has to keep reminding herself of what is most important , which is taking care of herself . But I think there is a genuine kind of humanity . It ? s by degree , it ? s not unconditional love but there is a love that develops . "

= = = Music = = =

Mother Gothel performs two of the films songs : " Mother Knows Best , " described as a " brassy , Broadway @-@ targeted tune " and an " authoritarian anthem " in which Gothel warns her daughter " all about the evils out to get Rapunzel , " and " Mother Knows Best (Reprise) , " both written by composer Alan Menken and lyricist Glenn Slater . While making Rapunzel 's music more modern in the vein of a singer @-@ songwriter , " young and contemporary and fresh , " Menken decided to make Gothel 's songs " more classic Broadway , " described as more of " a big stage diva type " of music . Critics have observed similarities between " Mother Knows Best " and " Out There " from Disney 's The Hunchback of Notre Dame (1996) , on which Menken also served as a composer .

Musically , the filmmakers " were open ... to ideas that [Murphy] had , " as the actress had felt different about " a slightly different ending to something musically in the arrangement , " requesting to try something else , to which the filmmakers responded , " Absolutely ! "

= = Appearances = =

= = = Tangled = = =

Mother Gothel appears in in Tangled (2010) . For hundreds of years , Gothel , a vain old woman , hoards the rejuvenative powers of a magical flower in order to remain young and beautiful , while selfishly keeping the flower 's whereabouts a secret from the rest of the kingdom . However , when the pregnant Queen of Corona falls fatally ill , the flower is desperately retrieved and fed to her , healing her and in turn inadvertently stripping Gothel of her access to what is essentially the only thing that is keeping her alive . Meanwhile , the King and Queen 's newborn daughter Rapunzel is gifted with the flower 's abilities , which manifest via her long , golden hair when a special song is sung so long as it remains uncut . Desperate to stay alive , Gothel steals the baby from the palace and she imprisoned her in a secluded tower for eighteen years , raising the child as her own and prohibiting her from leaving solely in order to use her hair to stay young .

As her eighteenth birthday approaches , Rapunzel continues to grow eager to leave the tower in order to view the mysterious " floating lights " ? secretly lanterns released annually by the King and Queen in remembrance of their lost daughter ? from up close . While Gothel , reprimanding Rapunzel when she asks , forbids this , she agrees to Rapunzel 's request to take a three @-@ day @-@ long journey to retrieve art supplies for Rapunzel , giving her just enough time to escape the tower , aided by a wanted thief named Flynn Rider . However , not too far from the castle , Gothel is soon tipped off by Maximus , a guard horse who is searching for Flynn , that Rapunzel has gone

missing . With her life endangered and her age rapidly increasing , Gothel desperately pursues Rapunzel and Flynn .

Enlisting the help of the Stabbington Brothers , a duo of muscular thieves who were once betrayed by Flynn , Gothel offers them both revenge on Flynn Rider and Rapunzel 's gift once they agree to help her find them , not intending to keep the latter half of her promise as she only wants Rapunzel for herself . When her initial attempt to convince Rapunzel to return home with her fails , Gothel , upon a second encounter , tricks the Stabbington Brothers into immobilizing Flynn , later knocking them unconscious when they attempt to kidnap Rapunzel . Convincing Rapunzel that Flynn has betrayed her , they return to the tower . While Flynn escapes from the dungeon , Rapunzel suddenly realizes her true identity and rebels against Gothel , only to be chained and gagged . Gothel stabs Flynn upon his arrival to rescue Rapunzel , but agrees to free Rapunzel long enough to heal him on the condition that she remain with her forever . However , Flynn unexpectedly cuts Rapunzel 's hair , causing it to lose its magic . It turns brown , and a horrified Gothel (failing to salvage Rapunzel 's hair) ages rapidly , falling out of the tower 's window but disintegrating into dust before she hits the ground , essentially dying of old age . Flynn dies in Rapunzel 's arms , but is miraculously revived by Rapunzel 's tear , and Rapunzel is finally reunited with her parents .

= = Reception = =

= = = Critical response = = =

Mother Gothel has garnered mostly positive reviews from film critics . Nigel Andrews of the Financial Times felt that the character was given the film 's " best lines and tunes . " Film4 described Gothel as a " fun " character " to the extent that she risks making the good guys seem a bit dull . " Hailing Gothel as the film 's " pierre de resistance , " Georgie Hobbs of Little White Lies wrote that Gothel " performs ... ' Mother Knows Best ' ... with a schizophrenic frenzy worthy of the very best of [Stephen] Sondheim 's crazed heroines . " IGN 's Jim Vejvoda penned , " Mother Gothel nearly steals the show , with her overprotective tyranny being made to seem almost rational . " Dubbed Disney 's " first passive @-@ aggressive villain " by Helen O 'Hara of Empire , the author reviewed , " the fact that [Gothel] is entirely bereft of superpowers and reliant on her considerable wits to keep her going makes her strangely admirable . " Writing for the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel , Cathy Jakicic called the character " a great contemporary villain " who " many daughters (and mothers) will find ... funny and a little too familiar . " In the The New York Times ' A. O. Scott 's opinion , " The Disney pantheon is full of evil stepmothers , though none quite match Mother Gothel for sheer sadistic intensity . " According to Jake Coyle of the Southtown Star , Gothel is " one of Disney 's best " villains , while Gary Thompson of the Philadelphia Daily News dubbed the character " one reason to love Disney . " Michael Smith of the Tulsa World reviewed Gothel as " perfectly wicked as she kills Rapunzel 's dreams . " Kirk Baird of The Blade identified Gothel as the film 's " strongest character . " Colin Covert of the Star Tribune commented , " In her own way , Gothel is scarier than Snow White 's wicked stepmother " because the character " doesn 't cast spells ; she 's fully capable of manipulating , guilt @-@ tripping and emotionally undermining the girl . " Several comparisons have been made between Gothel and the Evil Queen in Disney 's Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs (1937) , while several critics observed the character 's likeness to singer Cher ; Peter Howell of the Toronto Star joked that Gothel is " suspiciously Cher @-@ like in her quest for eternal youth . "

However , critics were not unanimous in their praise , as some reviewers felt that the character was too passive and tame to be a convincing villain . Jeff Meyers of the Detroit Metro Times wrote that the film 's " villain isn 't all that villainous , " while Tyler Hanley of the Palo Alto Daily News received Gothel as too " one @-@ dimensional and generic . " PopMatters ' Bill Gibron wrote that , as a villain , Gothel " can ? t compete with traditional House of Mouse miscreants like Maleficent or Cruella de Vil . " Alison Gang of U @-@ T San Diego felt that Gothel was an " annoying " character at times , while USA Today 's Claudia Puig wrote that " Gothel plays the role of Rapunzel 's loving mom [only

] sometimes convincingly . " Although Michelle Orange of Movieline enjoyed Gothel 's personality to an extent , the author criticized the character in a mixed review that " By reducing Mother Gothel to a vain woman who doesn 't want immortality so much as she 's determined to keep her profile taut , the film misses the chance to get seriously mythical , and as a result the narrative lacks dramatic impact . "

Meanwhile , Donna Murphy 's vocal performance as Gothel has garnered unanimous praise . Critics hailed the actress as a " standout " in particular , Lisa Schwarzbaum of Entertainment Weekly singled out Gothel as " a firecracker " amidst an otherwise " sedate " cast . " Joe Morgenstern of The Wall Street Journal wrote that " Donna Murphy does evil deliciously as the voice of Mother Gothel " , while Now 's Norman Wilner felt that the actress successfully " channelled " Broadway actress Patti LuPone in her performance . Meanwhile , Tim Robey of The Daily Telegraph compared Murphy 's performance to actress and singer Julie Andrews , writing , " the Julie @-@ Andrews @-@ on @-@ stimulants vocal stylings of Broadway star Donna Murphy ... makes Mother Gothel into a memorable manipulative diva . " Joe Neumaier of the Daily News called Murphy 's acting " deliciously mischievous " . Meanwhile , Jonathan Crocker of Total Film wrote , " Donna Murphy 's vocal performance as the vain , villainous fake @-@ matriarch is marvellous " , adding , " her belted @-@ out rendition of ' Mother Knows Best ' is easily the film 's top musical number . " Likewise , the Tampa Bay Times ' Steve Persall penned , " Nobody but Murphy should be cast as Gothel " , continuing , " her ' Mother Knows Best ' is a knockout . " Simon Reynolds of Digital Spy felt that " Donna Murphy steals the show " . Similarly dubbing Murphy a scene @-@ stealer , Canoe.ca 's Lindsey Ward wrote that " Murphy ... turns into a giant spectacle with her voice , a powerful force to be reckoned with . " David Edelstein of Vulture.com hailed Murphy as " Broadway 's gift to animated movies " , praising in particular the actress ' delivery of " the movie 's best line : ' Oh , so I 'm the bad guy now ? ' Quickflix deemed Murphy " wonderful " , while Stephen Witty of The Star @-@ Ledger ' called her " terrific " . Sandie Angulo Chen of Common Sense Media opined , " As for the dramatic tension , it 's best in the form of Mother Gothel -- brilliantly played by Murphy , whose signature Broadway voice ... adds the necessary punch " . Chen added that Gothel " is ... a personal favorite " while comparing the character to Cher and actress Sophia Loren . The A.V. Club 's Tasha Robinson wrote that Gothel was " magnificently voiced by star Murphy . " Murphy 's performance of " Mother Knows Best " has also been very positively received , with critics again comparing the actress to Julie Andrews . While calling Gothel 's voice " to die for " , Peter Travers of Rolling Stone deemed her performance of the song " comic bliss . " Linda Cook of the Quad @-@ City Times penned that the song was " belted out wonderfully by Murphy and makes the purchase of the soundtrack worthwhile . " Marjorie Baumgarten of The Austin Chronicle opined , " Murphy brings stage showmanship to her musical interludes as Mother Gothel , which drip with sarcasm and biting wit . " Slant Magazine 's Christian Blauvelt , who felt that the film 's songs lacked as a result of Moore 's " pop @-@ star vocals " , happened to very much enjoy Gothel 's performances , writing , " when Broadway vet Murphy takes to scaling Menken 's octave @-@ climbing melodies like a vocal escalator , it 's a different story . " Calling Gothel " one of the most potent schemers in the Disney canon , " Time 's Richard Corliss felt that Murphy 's performance was worthy of a Tony Award for Best Actress , concluding , " no one can summon the malice in humor , and the fun in pain , like this prima Donna . " In his review of the film 's soundtrack , James Christopher Monger of AllMusic wrote that both " Moore and Murphy take on the lion 's share of the work here , and both deliver the goods . "

IGN ranked Mother Gothel fourth on their list of " the 12 Disney Villainesses " . In a list of the thirty @-@ three greatest Disney villains conducted by E ! , Mother Gothel was ranked twenty @-@ fifth .

= = = Merchandise = = =

In addition to the popular Mother Gothel Classic Doll and appearing alongside Rapunzel , Flynn , Pascal and Maximus in the Rapunzel Tangled Figure Play Set , the character 's likeness has since been adapted and modified by Disney into a much more glamorous doll for sale alongside several re @-@ imagined Disney villainesses as part of the company 's Disney Villains Designer Collection ,

released in 2012 . Costumed in a long burgundy gown made of satin , Gothel wears her thick black hair in " a theatrical up @-@ do . "