

PRINCESS FALLING

By

Cory Barnett

FADE IN:

INT. LARGE WOODEN BOX - DAY

Thin shafts of light trickle into the darkness. The muffled struggles of an infant interrupt heavy, panicked breathing.

GLENORA, a young mother, crouches and holds her hand firmly over her daughter's mouth. BRIANNA squirms, trying to release her mother's grip.

GLENORA

Shh. Please, honey. Shh.

They hear two of the queen's guards, SHERM and DWILL, overturn furniture. CRASH, THUMP, a chair flies against the box. Mother and child both stay still.

SHERM (O.S.)

She's not here.

DWILL (O.S.)

Don't be stupid, she's gotta be.  
This is the last house. Did you  
find the star? I know I didn't.

The ransack continues. Another THUD lands against the box and the trickle of light widens. The mother tries to make herself smaller.

SHERM (O.S.)

Look at this.

DWILL (O.S.)

Help me pry it open.

The box only holds for a moment.

INT. ADOBE HOVEL - DAY

The two guards rip Brianna out of her mother's arms. Glenora puts up a fight, but the larger men easily knock her back.

They shear Brianna's short blond locks, revealing a small golden star on her scalp.

SHERM  
She's the one.

DWILL  
See, told you.

SHERM  
The queen's gonna love us. Grab  
the breeder.

They swaddle the infant and place her in Sherm's belly harness.

They lead the shackled mother into the hazy, grey day.

EXT. ADOBE HOVEL - DAY

All of the TOWNSPEOPLE stand in a long row, bound together like slaves. The mother's shackles are linked in with the others. Sherm runs off as the mother lunges for the baby.

GLENORA  
Please don't kill her. She doesn't  
know. She's only a child.

A whip cracks against her back. FIVE MORE GUARDS lead the mother and the other prisoners away.

EXT. CASTLE - DAY

Sherm rides a grey steed to the gates.

INT. CASTLE -DAY

QUEEN PALA, a beautiful witch with a glowing gem in her crown, holds the SCREAMING baby by one foot, repulsed and confused.

QUEEN PALA  
Now what?

ANTAGNA, Pala's over-bearing mother, snatches the baby from her daughter.

ANTAGNA  
We take her to the seer.

INT. FOREST CAVE - NIGHT

Torches light the opening. Antagna leads in a 2 year old Brianna by the hand.

The SEER, a two-headed old hag, sits on a rock in the middle of the cave. When she speaks, both heads talk, creating an eerie stereo effect.

ANTAGNA

Why must you move around so much?  
It took me over a year to find you.

SEER

Aww, don't your locator spells work  
any more?

ANTAGNA

You know they don't. Give me some  
more of your hair.

Queen Pala leans against the back wall to watch.

The Seer just grins.

SEER

That wouldn't be very much fun,  
now, would it?

ANTAGNA

You may enjoy this game of hide and  
seek, but MY time is running out.

SEER

Your time, is it? I thought it was  
mine. What else do I have to do but  
sit around and wait for people like  
you to come visit? Pah, after  
twelve centuries, you'd get bored  
too.

ANTAGNA

We've found the girl.

SEER

Then you don't need me anyway. I  
don't see why you're so worked up.

ANTAGNA

What do we do with her? I won't  
have you trick me like last time.

SEER

Is it my fault you killed the child  
before you came here? I could have  
saved you the effort.

The seer stands and grabs multicolored bag.

SEER

I've got to stretch my legs. These old bones creak more than they used to.

ANTAGNA

What about the girl?

SEER

She will overthrow your daughter, as is the prophesy. But, her soul will move on to a new body should she be killed before her thirteenth birthday.

ANTAGNA

What should we do with her until then?

The seer walks past her to the cave's mouth.

EXT. FOREST CAVE

The seer calls back to Antagna.

SEER

I suppose you'll have to keep her.

INT. CASTLE - DAY

The toddler sits, tied to a chair as Pala and Antagna discuss her.

QUEEN PALA

We could lock her in the dungeon.

ANTAGNA

No, she would just grow to resent you. We'll have to keep her, raise her as your own. We've had problems circumventing the prophesy in the past. Let's meet it head on.

QUEEN PALA

It'll never work.

ANTAGNA

How dare you contradict me.

QUEEN PALA

Sorry, mother.

ANTAGNA

We will make her so evil that when she takes over the throne, it will be a blessing. Instead of overthrowing you, she will succeed your rein as the rightful heir.

Queen Pala strokes the child's hair, garnering a sweet smile.

INT. CASTLE TOWER - BRIANNA'S ROOM - DAY

Brianna, now 3, sits on a patch of lush grass on the concrete floor of a beautiful room. She has every toy imaginable.

Brianna uses whispers to coax flowers to grow from the grass.

Antagna rips the flowers from their stems, stomping on the grass.

LATER

Queen Pala rocks in a rocking chair, reading out loud from a book titled: Eat the Poor. Brianna claps appreciatively.

INT. CASTLE - HALLWAY - DAY

Brianna, 4, rides a wooden tricycle down a long corridor. She seems to purposefully ram into SERVANTS, particularly those carrying something breakable.

Antagna steps into the hall. When no one is looking, she pushes the child off the tricycle.

INT. CASTLE - KITCHEN - DAY

Brianna, 6, repeatedly hits the cook over the head with a heavy ladle. Queen Pala cracks eggs over a bowl.

QUEEN PALA

Here, darling. A meat cleaver works better.

She hands the child a meat cleaver.

BRIANNA

Is it ready?

QUEEN PALA

Almost. Help me stir.

Brianna abandons the meat cleaver in favor of a wooden spoon. She stirs with broad and hasty strokes, getting the bowl's contents everywhere.

QUEEN PALA (CONT'D)

Don't lose too much, we want this  
cake to be perfect.

EXT. CASTLE WALLS - DAY

Brianna and Queen Pala carry a birthday cake through the doors of an orphanage. Malnourished children cower in their shadows.

INT. ORPHANAGE - DAY

A listless YOUNGSTER blows out the candles on the cake. Brianna and Queen Pala watch from a distance. A NURSE cuts into the cake.

Thousands of spiders emerge. They crawl over the table and spill onto the floor. CHILDREN and their CAREGIVERS scream in horror.

Queen Pala and Brianna skip hand-in-hand out the door.

INT. CASTLE - BRIANNA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Brianna lies tucked in bed. Queen Pala comes in and kisses her lightly on the cheek.

QUEEN PALA

Good night, Princess.

BRIANNA

Good night, Mamma. Tomorrow will  
you show me how to turn beggars  
into frogs?

QUEEN PALA

We'll see. Get some sleep.

INT. CASTLE - HALLWAY - DAY

A small KITTEN mews at Brianna, 8. She reaches down and gently scratches behind its ear.

A noise sounds down the hall. Brianna straightens up as a SERVANT walks toward her. She nudged the kitten under a shelf with her foot.

Brianna establishes eye contact with the servant and makes a show of pushing breakables off the shelves.

EXT. MARKET - DAY

Brianna, 10, walks through the streets followed by several SERVANTS. Every time she points at an item, a servant buys it.

Every time she points at a VENDOR, he is set upon by guards and carted away.

Brianna laughs at the vendors' protests.

INT. CASTLE TOWER - DAY

Brianna, 12, sets up tea for several stuffed animals. She's portly and unkind, Varuca Salt without the smile. She holds a tea cup and saucer out to a stuffed elephant.

BRIANNA  
 Good afternoon, Ms. Elephant.  
 Please have some tea.

Ms. Elephant just sits there.

BRIANNA (CONT'D)  
 It's nice and hot. Drink some.

Ms. Elephant doesn't move.

BRIANNA (CONT'D)  
 Come on.

Nope.

Brianna angrily shoves the tea into Ms. Elephant's face.

BRIANNA (CONT'D)  
 I said drink it.

Ms. Elephant tumbles off of the chair and onto the floor.

Brianna kicks the chair and knocks over the table. She throws her other "guests" at the walls and smashes the tea cup on the ground.

BRIANNA (CONT'D)  
 Auntie!

She pauses to take a deep breath.

BRIANNA (CONT'D)  
 Auntie!

A harried-looking older woman, AUNTIE, rushes through the door.

AUNTIE  
What? What is it, child?

BRIANNA  
Ms. Elephant won't drink!

AUNTIE  
Oh, my. Did you try asking her nicely?

Brianna picks up a stuffed mouse and throws it at Auntie.

BRIANNA  
Of course, I asked nicely. But she wouldn't drink. Look at her.

Brianna points an accusatory finger at the stuffed elephant.

AUNTIE  
Well, Brianna, honey, you do know that you're just playing pretend. Right?

Brianna raises her hateful glare to the woman's face.

BRIANNA  
What did you say to me?

AUNTIE  
I was just...

BRIANNA  
Get out, get out! I'll have you turned into a toad or a snake or something. Get out before I call my mother.

Auntie starts to back away.

AUNTIE  
She's at the-

BRIANNA  
Mother!

Brianna points a finger at Auntie. An anemic bolt of lightning trips out, fizzling to a small ember just as it reaches the woman's tunic.

Auntie smothers the small flame.

AUNTIE

She's at the market. Can't we just-

BRIANNA

You know she'll hear me anyway.  
She'll be here as fast as her  
servants can carry her. Mother!

AUNTIE

Please, stop yelling, please. I'll  
do whatever you ask.

Brianna raises her eyebrows, then her nose.

BRIANNA

I want all elephants outlawed.

AUNTIE

What?

BRIANNA

Every last one. There will be no  
elephants anywhere in the land.

AUNTIE

But, there already aren't any-

BRIANNA

Don't cross me.

Auntie abruptly stops.

BRIANNA (CONT'D)

And I want you here every morning  
at half-past nine. You'll come  
every day until you can teach Ms.  
Elephant to be a polite guest and  
finish her tea.

AUNTIE

But-

Brianna points a finger at her.

BRIANNA

Do it!