

Prancer Callbacks

33.

Jessica runs out of the kitchen. John is about to go after her, but stays where he is.

LIGHTS DOWN.

Ages 7-14
Females

Then...

WIND BLOWS. Also, a BANGING SOUND. Both sounds are muted at first, but gradually get louder.

SCENE 9 - SHED - NIGHT

It's the middle of the night. The mystery of the banging sound is quickly solved. The door of an old shed on the Riggs' property is open and whipping back and forth in the wind and slamming up against the side of the shed.

A flashlight beam pierces through the darkness. Jessica appears a moment later. She has properly dressed for her excursion into the cold night. Winter jacket, gloves, jeans, boots. When she gets to the shed, she grabs the door to prevent another loud bang and peers cautiously inside the shed.

JESSICA

Anyone in there?

When there is no answer, Jessica steps into the shed and closes the door behind her. Her flashlight reveals a musty, cobwebby place, full of discarded farm equipment. An old-fashioned sleigh is tucked away in one corner, boxes piled high on its seat.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

Hello? Anyone here?

As if in reply, a stack of old wooden barrels suddenly CRASHES to the floor. Jessica YELPS in surprise and shines her flashlight in the direction of the commotion.

There, in the beam of the flashlight, is the reindeer from the woods!

JESSICA (CONT'D)

It's you.

Surprise, wonder and delight all register in Jessica's expression.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

You followed me home.

The reindeer hobbles from the corner of the shed, then collapses onto the floor.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

No!

Jessica rushes to the deer, then stops when her approach causes the injured animal to try to get back up.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

It's okay. I'm not gonna hurt you.

The deer settles a bit.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

I just want to check out your leg, okay?

Jessica cautiously approaches the deer. Once again the deer struggles to get up, but gives up, instead issuing a plaintive cry.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

Awww, you poor thing.

Jessica takes off her scarf and sits next to the deer, which makes no attempt to get away. But when Jessica tries to wrap her scarf around his injured leg, the animal jerks back.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

I'm just gonna wrap this around your leg. It'll make you feel better.

The exhausted deer exhales and lays on its side. This time it doesn't resist as Jessica ties the scarf around his leg.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

That'll have to do for now.

The deer lies still. When Jessica pets the deer, she gets no resistance from the animal. The reindeer HUFFS loudly.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

I wish I could stay here with you tonight, but my dad might notice I'm gone. Don't worry, though. First thing tomorrow, I'm going for Dr. Benton. He's our vet. He'll fix you up.

Jessica continues to pet the deer.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

I'm glad you followed me home. You came to the right place. I won't let you down. That's a promise.

Jessica gives the deer a final pet, then stands and heads for the door. Just before leaving...

JESSICA (CONT'D)

My name's Jessica, by the way. I already know your name.
Goodnight, Prancer. Sleep tight!

Jessica exits and closes the door behind her. The worn out deer remains laying on its side. It HUFFS loudly, then is silent.

LIGHTS DOWN.

SCENE 10 - RIGGS HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

John and Steve are in the kitchen. John is at the sink, doing the dishes. Steve sits at the table, having breakfast.

JOHN

Jessica! Time's wasting!

A moment, then Jessica runs into the kitchen, carrying her backpack. She tosses it onto the floor, sits at the table, pours some cereal into a bowl, some milk, and starts eating.

JOHN (CONT'D)

(looking out the window as he washes the dishes)

Something was eating our little trees last night.

JESSICA

(freezing)

What do you think it was?

JOHN

Oh, I don't know. From the looks of the droppings it might have been a deer.

JESSICA

A deer? Must have been pretty hungry if it was eating wood.

Prancer Callbacks

46.

Ages 7-14

JESSICA

Nothing. This is not nothing. If I told the local paper about this, it'd be the biggest news in the entire world.

CAROL

I doubt that.

JESSICA

You're acting really weird. What's going on with you? You get in a fight with your mom or something?

CAROL

No. Nothing's wrong.

JESSICA

What is it, then?

CAROL

It's just...

JESSICA

What? *What?*

CAROL

Well... It's just that... I don't believe in Santa anymore.

Jessica is speechless.

CAROL (CONT'D)

You can't tell me you weren't starting to wonder yourself. I mean, think about it. How can one man go down all the chimneys in all the homes in the world in one night?

JESSICA

He's magical, Carol.

CAROL

It just doesn't make any sense.

JESSICA

Well, not everything in the world can be explained.

CAROL

I've never seen Santa Claus. And I've done a lot of looking.

JESSICA

You've never seen God, either. Does that mean there's no God?

CAROL

Well, who knows about that, for sure.

JESSICA

But if there's no God, there's no heaven.

CAROL

Maybe there isn't.

JESSICA

All right, Carol. You're not my friend anymore.

CAROL

What'd I say?

JESSICA

That there's no heaven.

CAROL

So?

JESSICA

What about my mother then?

A pained-looking Jessica, her angel wings askew, walks away from Carol.

CAROL

Jessie. Hold up. Hold up! I'm sorry. I didn't mean that. I don't know what I was thinking. Of course I believe in God. Of course I believe in heaven.

JESSICA

What about Santa Claus?

CAROL

Well...

Carol busies herself with fixing Jessica's crooked angel wings to avoid answering the question.

JESSICA

Can you come over to my place tomorrow?

CAROL

I think I can get away for a little while.

JESSICA

Good. When you meet Prancer, you'll know.

CAROL

Know what?

JESSICA

You'll just *know*.

At this point, Jessica and Carol are the only ones left in the classroom. Miss Fairburn appears.

MISS FAIRBURN

Let's go, you two! We're about to start!

Miss Fairburn does a double-take at Jessica's angel outfit as she walks past her. Next to the classroom is the school auditorium. A couple rows of bleachers are set up on stage. Jessica and Carol push past several classmates to get to their spot. Parents in the audience whisper in eager anticipation of the holiday presentation.

A spotlight hits the children. Miss Fairburn's arms go up, then down. The choir begins to sing "The Little Drummer Boy". Surprisingly, perhaps... they're really good! Even Jessica blends in with the student's young, sweet voices. As the song continues, however, Riley gets a mean case of the hiccups!

And yet, the song still works, even with Riley hiccupping away...

SCENE 13 - SHED - NIGHT

MUSIC: The choir reaches the end of "The Little Drummer Boy".

Jessica lays next to Prancer, who is nibbling on some hay. The shed has been decorated with a long silver garland and Christmas ornaments. Jessica reads from a large red book.

JESSICA

... you tear apart the baby's rattle to see what makes the noise inside, but there is a veil covering the unseen world which not the strongest man could tear apart. Is it real? Ah, Virginia, in all the world there is nothing else real and abiding. No Santa Claus?

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