

Briana and the King

The sad and lonely King huddled in the corner of the dungeon. Sixteen years ago, he'd lost his one true love and their unborn babe, and still he mourned.

That morning, a girl, Briana, and her friends had come to the palace, demanding he give up his kingdom, cease feasting and hunting; ordering him to use his wealth to help his people, not drive them into poverty. And his guards had flung him in here. His rule was over and he feared for his life.

The door swung open and Briana stood before him.

Come,' she said to the King, 'let me take you somewhere more cheery, somewhere we can talk properly.'

'I'm sorry I was so long,' she added as they left the dungeon, 'I lost my way.'

They reached the kitchens. 'I thought it might be more cosy here,' she said.

The cook looked up from her task and curtsied deep when she spotted them.

'Now; sire, lady, what can I get you? A midnight feast? Or a hot chocolate? I know that often comforts you late at night, sire, when your thoughts turn to despair.'

'A hot chocolate would be most welcome,' smiled the King, 'thank you.' The cook curtsied again, blushing as she scurried away to prepare the drinks; it was the first time he had spoken kindly to her his whole life.

Briana and the King talked long through the night. She told him of his people's plight, of their fight against the taxes imposed on them, and when those who collected them had nothing but their own wealth in their minds. He'd not realised, and began to feel ashamed.

As she told him of her mother's death, she fondled the silver strand around her neck.

'Where did you get that?' the King asked. 'My fairy godmother gave me one like that when I was born. I gave it to my one true love, before my parents sent her and our unborn babe away from the palace. I hoped it would bring them back to me...'

'It was my mother's. She told me my father, her true love, gave it to her before she had to leave...'

The King gasped, 'Briana, you're my daughter! I should have known; you're so like her! I shouldn't have let her go; I should have stood up to my parents. And now she's gone...'

Tears started rolling down his face. But Briana embraced him, saying, 'Father, don't cry. She would be happy to know that we've found each other at last.'

'But how can I make amends?' the King asked.

They continued to talk, and he finally began to rejoice. He'd gained a wonderful daughter, and his true purpose in life. As the sun rose the next day they announced that henceforth, the kingdom would be ruled by the people, those who had the best interests of all in their hearts. And the King would be their ambassador, spreading their message to all the kingdoms of the world.