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the Runaway Princess of Emberfast

by

Jesse Aukeman

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Production notes can be found at the end of this script.

SYNOPSIS:

Princess Adriana of Emberfast is quite distressed! She is being forced to marry a prince from a neighboring kingdom even though he is a complete stranger! In order to avoid the marriage, Adriana runs away into the deepest, darkest forest, where she encounters a pair of inept dragon hunters who try to kidnap her. While in the forest, Adriana also meets a strange hermit woman with secrets of her own. Over the course of her adventure, Princess Adriana must use her wits to evade threats and take control of her story. Along the way, she gains a few friends and learns lessons about responsibility and sacrifice. This original fairy tale features vivid characters, a thrilling story, and lots of fun humor for children and adults!

CAST SIZE:

2 Females; 2 Males; 0-5 Either

RUNNING TIME:

Approximately 30 minutes

CHARACTERS:

ADRIANA (F) Teenaged princess; self-absorbed, but not unkind; also plays **NARRATOR 4**

RALPH (M or F) Bossy, calculating; FLINT's older brother; also plays **NARRATOR 2**

FLINT (M or F) Gullible and easily excited; RALPH's younger brother; also plays **NARRATOR 3**

TÓVENA (F) Wild and wary; lives alone and likes it that way; also plays **NARRATOR 1**

ZEMY (M or F) The very last dragon; can be performed by a puppet or an actor

NOTE: RALPH and FLINT can be played by actors of any gender. NARRATORS can be played by additional actors in order to expand the cast. For more information and ideas about portraying ZEMY, see the "Production Notes" at the end of the script.

TIME:

Once upon a time

PLACE:

The kingdom of Emberfast and the deepest, darkest forest

SCENES:

SCENE 1:	The palace in Emberfast and the deepest, darkest forest
SCENE 2:	A clearing in the forest
SCENE 3:	Outside Tóvena's hut in the middle of the forest
SCENE 4:	A clearing in the forest
SCENE 5:	Outside Tóvena's hut in the middle of the forest
EPILOGUE:	Happily Ever After

SCENE 1

The setting is long ago, in the kingdom of Emberfast. [See "Production Notes" at the end of the script for information on set, costumes, etc.] A trio of NARRATORS enter to begin the story and are joined by ADRIANA, who is wearing a beautiful blue ball gown. Together, they portray the action of the narration.

NARRATOR 1

Once upon a time, in the faraway kingdom of Emberfast, there was a beautiful, young princess named Adriana.

NARRATOR 2

Princess Adriana had a great life.

ADRIANA

(Excitedly:)

Yes! I do!

NARRATOR 3

She lived in a huge palace and always had the best gowns and jewels.

(NARRATORS hand jewelry to ADRIANA. She puts it on.)

ADRIANA

(Proudly:)

It's true!

NARRATOR 1

But the people of Emberfast were very poor and the kingdom had many debts.

ADRIANA

(*This is news to her.)*

Wait. What?

NARRATOR 3

They were so poor that they lived in tiny shacks and there was barely enough money for food.

ADRIANA

Really?

NARRATOR 2

The only way for Emberfast to survive was for Princess Adriana to marry Prince Percival from the neighboring kingdom of Breckland.

ADRIANA

I have to marry *who*?

NARRATOR 3

Adriana did NOT want to marry Prince Percival of Breckland.

ADRIANA

I've never even met the guy!

NARRATOR 1

The merging kingdoms of Breckland and Emberfast threw a lavish ball, where Princess Adriana and Prince Percival would meet for the very first time before getting married the next day.

ADRIANA

Married the next day? You mean...tomorrow?

NARRATOR 2

At the ball, there was elegant music, lively dancing, and delicious food. Everyone was having a wonderful time.

ADRIANA

Except for me!

NARRATOR 1

As she was about to make her grand entrance and meet her fiancé for the first time, Adriana had only one thought.

ADRIANA

I gotta get outta here.

ALL NARRATORS

So she ran away.

NARRATOR 3

Adriana slipped out of the palace and fled into the nearby forest.

NARRATOR 1

She ran until the sounds of the ball completely faded away.

NARRATOR 2

She ran until the lights of the palace totally disappeared.

ADRIANA

I don't care what happens to Emberfast. I cannot marry that prince!

NARRATOR 1

As the night darkened and the trees thickened, Adriana continued onward until she was in the middle of the deepest, darkest forest.

NARRATOR 3

As she looked around, she realized she was utterly and completely lost.

NARRATOR 2

Desperate for a place to rest for the night, she wandered aimlessly, until she discovered a quiet hollow near a stream.

ADRIANA

I suppose this will do.

NARRATOR 1

The hollow was surrounded by large rocks and twisted trees that blocked the chilly night wind.

NARRATOR 3

Just as the princess lay down in the hollow to sleep for the night, she heard a strange rustling sound.

ADRIANA

It sounds sort of like whispering. Is someone there?

NARRATOR 2

Suddenly, a swarm of giant spiders attacked Adriana. This hollow was their nest!

(A swarm of SPIDERS attacks ADRIANA. [See "Production Notes" for information and ideas about portraying the SPIDERS.] ADRIANA screams and tries to escape.)

NARRATOR 1

The princess pushed past the spiders' webs and their drooling mouths until she reached the safety of a nearby clearing.

NARRATOR 3

Exhausted and afraid, she collapsed and finally fell asleep.

(ADRIANA lays down and sleeps.)

(Transition to…)

SCENE 2

(*The next morning. A clearing in the middle of the forest.)*

NARRATOR 1

The next morning, Adriana was discovered by a pair of brothers on a quest.

(NARRATORS 2 and 3 put on hats to become RALPH and FLINT and "enter" the scene.)

FLINT

Can we stop and take a break? We've been walking all morning.

RALPH

There's no time to waste.

FLINT

But I'm thirsty!

RALPH

Then you should have remembered to bring water.

FLINT

You know I'm bad at remembering things!

(RALPH notices ADRIANA sleeping on the ground.)

RALPH

Flint, look! What is that?

FLINT

Is it some kind of strange, blue animal?

RALPH

No. I think it's...a girl.

FLINT

Can I kick her?

RALPH

No! You can't kick her!

(Beat.)

I'm gonna kick her.

(RALPH kicks ADRIANA. She wakes up, sees the BROTHERS, and recoils.)

ADRIANA

Who are you?

RALPH

Hey. Hey. Calm down. My name is Ralph and this is Flint.

ADRIANA

Are you friend or foe?

RALPH

What?

ADRIANA

I said are you friends or are you foes?

FLINT

(Confused:)

Uh…we're brothers.

RALPH

Lady, we're not gonna hurt you, so you can stop your quivering and whimpering.

ADRIANA

You'd be quivering and whimpering, too, if you were me.

RALPH

If I was you, I wouldn't be in the deepest, darkest forest all alone and dressed like I was going to a cotillion.

ADRIANA

You needn't make fun of me! I'm quite distressed, so unless you're willing to help me find the nearest village, please leave me alone!

RALPH

Sorry, lady. We can't help you. We're on a quest.

ADRIANA

A quest? What sort of quest?

FLINT

We're hunting a dragon.

ADRIANA

A dragon?

RALPH

Yes. A dragon. You know, fiery breath. Scaly body. Razor-sharp claws.

ADRIANA

You can't be serious.

FLINT

Why? Have you seen one? Is it nearby?

ADRIANA

No. I have not seen a dragon. Everyone knows dragons went extinct hundreds of years ago.

RALPH

Everyone *thinks* dragons went extinct hundreds of years ago. But we have proof at least one is still alive and lives in this forest.

ADRIANA

What are you talking about?

FLINT

We have proof! Show her the fur.

(RALPH removes a patch of fur from his pocket.)

RALPH

We found this patch of fur not far from this very spot in the forest.

ADRIANA

So?

FLINT

It's dragon fur!

ADRIANA

Dragon...*fur*?

RALPH

Yes! Dragon fur!

ADRIANA

How do you know?

RALPH

No other creature has fur like this. We even compared it with illustrations of dragons in old books.

FLINT

Yeah, we looked in tons of books. It's definitely dragon fur.

RALPH

And there is definitely a dragon in this forest. There have been rumors about it for years.

ADRIANA

Well, even if there is a dragon, why would you want to find it? Aren't you afraid it might hurt you?

RALPH

We can take care of ourselves. Besides, do you have any idea how famous we'd be if we found a dragon?

FLINT

And there's the treasure, too. Tell her about the treasure!

RALPH

All dragons guard a huge stash of treasure. So, if we find the dragon, we find the treasure.

FLINT

And then we'll be really, really rich!

RALPH

We've been hunting this dragon for years. And we're getting close. I can practically taste it.

ADRIANA

That sounds like an awful lot of effort based on a little patch of fur.

RALPH

You don't know anything about it!

FLINT

Yeah! You're just a dumb girl in a big, dumb dress!

ADRIANA

How dare you! I'm not dumb and neither is my dress!

RALPH

Say...why are you out here in the forest? And in such lavish clothing?

ADRIANA

That's none of your business.

RALPH

It's quite unusual to find a refined, young lady such as yourself in the middle of the deepest, darkest forest.

ADRIANA

I'm just...going for a walk.

RALPH

In the middle of the deepest, darkest forest?

ADRIANA

Yes...

RALPH

(Suddenly remembering:)

Hey Flint, what was that sign we saw back in town?

FLINT

What sign?

RALPH

The sign that was posted all over the village! Something about a missing girl. Didn't I tell you to take one and put it in your pocket?

FLINT

Oh! That sign. I have it right here.

RALPH

Well…read it!

FLINT

(FLINT takes out poster and reads:)

Reward for runaway princess.

RALPH

(He looks at ADRIANA with renewed interest)

Runaway princess!

FLINT

(With money signs in his eyes:)

Reward!

ADRIANA

You can't possibly think that refers to me.

RALPH

If the slipper fits.

ADRIANA

I'm not a princess. How ridiculous! I'm…nobody. I'm just a peasant girl.

(Beat. ADRIANA looks down at her gown.)

With a really good fashion sense.

RALPH

What else does that poster say?

FLINT

It says she was last seen wearing a blue ball gown.

(Beat. RALPH and FLINT look at ADRIANA. She looks down at her dress.)

ADRIANA

That's just a coincidence. And besides, this dress isn't really blue. It's more of a cerulean.

RALPH

Just how big do you supposed that reward is, Flint?

FLINT

I bet it's pretty big, Ralph.

RALPH

I think you're right. In fact, I bet that reward is so big that I'm willing to delay our dragon hunt in order to claim it.

FLINT

Me, too!

ADRIANA

Stay away from me!

RALPH

Don't worry. We aren't going to hurt you. Unless you make this difficult.

(RALPH and FLINT grab ADRIANA's arms.)

ADRIANA

Leave me alone! I don't want to go back to Emberfast!

FLINT

We don't care what you want!

RALPH

You're coming with us. We're taking you back to your kingdom and claiming that reward!

ADRIANA

(Breaking free from their grip:)

Wait! I lied earlier. I did see a dragon…over there…somewhere.

RALPH

You saw the dragon?

FLINT

You know where it lives?

ADRIANA

Yes!

RALPH

Did you see its treasure?

ADRIANA

Yes! There was piles and piles of treasure. And the dragon was…sleeping right next to the treasure.

FLINT

Where is it?

ADRIANA

I'll tell you everything, but only if you agree to leave me alone. I can't go back to Emberfast.

RALPH

Yes. Fine. Just tell us where you saw the dragon!

ADRIANA

It's not far from here.

(An idea comes to her.)

The dragon is down this hill, across the stream, in a hollow surrounded by large rocks and twisted trees.

FLINT

Have we ever looked there?

RALPH

No. I've never been in that part of the forest.

ADRIANA

I promise, the dragon is there. Just follow the rustling, whispering sound. That will lead you right to him. It's the sound he makes when he's sleeping.

RALPH

Good idea. We'll attack when the beast is asleep!

FLINT

It will never see us coming!

RALPH

Let's go, brother!

(RALPH and FLINT exit hurriedly.)

ADRIANA

That was close. I gotta get out of here before they come back!

(Transition to...)

SCENE 3

(A few hours later. Another part of the forest, near an old, dilapidated cottage.)

NARRATOR 1

After the narrow escape from the dragon-hunting brothers, Adriana continued even deeper into the deepest, darkest forest. When she thought she could go no further, she came upon a small cottage.

ADRIANA

Hello? Is anyone here?

(NARRATOR 1 becomes TÓVENA and emerges from the cottage, carrying a tray with various tools and ingredients.)

TÓVENA

What are you doing here?

ADRIANA

I'm just looking for a place to rest for a moment.

TÓVENA

How did you find this place?

ADRIANA

I don't know. I'm lost.

TÓVENA

Well, you can't stay here.

ADRIANA

I don't have anywhere else to go!

TÓVENA

That's not my problem.

ADRIANA

Please! I'm so weary! Couldn't you at least give me something to drink?

(ADRIANA gestures toward the jug of liquid on the tray. TÓVENA pulls farther away.)

TÓVENA

You can't drink this! It's not for you!

ADRIANA

(Finally breaking down:)

Why is everyone in this forest so mean?

(ADRIANA starts to cry. She sinks to the ground.)

TÓVENA

Well, crying won't help anything.

(Beat. ADRIANA continues crying.)

And I'm not mean.

(Beat. The crying continues.)

I just...I don't like being surprised is all.

(Beat. Still more crying.)

Well...I suppose it won't do any harm for you to rest here.

ADRIANA

Really?

TÓVENA

Yes. But only for a moment. I'm quite busy and I can't waste my time looking after you.

ADRIANA

I won't be any trouble. I promise.

TÓVENA

And you can't go inside my cottage, so don't ask.

ADRIANA

Alright. Thank you.

(ADRIANA stops crying. TÓVENA sits and begins preparing and mixing ingredients. She continues measuring and mixing during the proceeding dialogue.)

TÓVENA

So...what are you? Some kind of princess?

ADRIANA

How did you know?

TÓVENA

Lucky guess.

ADRIANA

My name is Adriana, Princess of the Kingdom of Emberfast.

TÓVENA

And I'm Tóvena. Regular person of this hut in the middle of the forest.

ADRIANA

Are you making fun of me?

TÓVENA

Sorry. I'm not used to being in the presence of royalty. Actually, I'm not used to being in the presence of…well…anyone.

ADRIANA

Don't you have any family? Or friends?

TÓVENA

Not anymore. I live alone and I like it that way.

ADRIANA

I don't have family or friends either. Well…I do. But I'll never see them again.

TÓVENA

Why not?

ADRIANA

I ran away. And I can't ever go back.

TÓVENA

What could possibly be so bad about your life that you had to run away?

ADRIANA

Today is supposed to be my wedding day.

TÓVENA

Congratulations.

ADRIANA

It's not a happy occasion.

TÓVENA

Why not?

ADRIANA

The groom.

TÓVENA

What's wrong with him?

ADRIANA

I've never even met him.

TÓVENA

Then how did he ask you to marry him?

ADRIANA

He didn't ask me. No one *asked* me! Everyone is making decisions about my life and no one ever asks me what I want.

TÓVENA

They never do.

(TÓVENA continues mixing potion.)

ADRIANA

What are you making?

TÓVENA

It's nothing. Just a simple potion. But you can't have any. Humans can't drink this potion.

(Changing the subject.)

TÓVENA (continued)

So who is it, exactly, that you're supposed to marry?

ADRIANA

His name is Prince Percival of Breckland.

TÓVENA

How bad could he be? He is a prince, after all.

ADRIANA

But I don't know him at all! We've never even met. But that's not even the worst part.

TÓVENA

It gets worse?

ADRIANA

Yes. He's the prince of Breckland and I'm the princess of Emberfast. After we join together in marriage, *Breck*land and Ember*fast* will merge, too.

(Beat.)

And I don't want to be the queen of Breckfast!

(TÓVENA laughs.)

ADRIANA

Is that funny to you?

TÓVENA

No.

(She laughs some more.)

Well, maybe a little.

ADRIANA

This isn't a laughing matter.

TÓVENA

The Queen of Breckfast! That seems like a pretty…scrambled situation!

(TÓVENA laughs at her own joke. ADRIANA is not amused.)

ADRIANA

That's not funny. This is serious.

TÓVENA

You're right. I'm sorry. It sounds like you're in quite a jam.

(TÓVENA laughs.)

ADRIANA

Please stop.

TÓVENA

But I'm on a roll! Get it? A roll!

(TÓVENA laughs. ADRIANA silently glares at TÓVENA.)

TÓVENA

Sorry.

(Beat. She stops laughing.)

You know, it could be a lot worse.

ADRIANA

I suppose you're right. At least I'm not the Queen of Brunch.

TÓVENA

That's the attitude! Look on the sunnyside!

(She laughs.)

Okay. I'm really done now.

(Beat. TÓVENA catches her breath.)

Look. If you don't wanna be the Queen of Breckfast, then don't marry the guy.

ADRIANA

It's not that simple. It turns out my kingdom is having some money problems and this marriage is the only way to pay our debts.

TÓVENA

What kind of money problems?

ADRIANA

Apparently, the people of Emberfast have to live in tiny shacks and can't afford any food.

TÓVENA

You're telling me your kingdom is broke and your people are starving and you just ran away?

ADRIANA

I ran away because I was being forced to marry someone I don't know!

TÓVENA

I'm not saying you need to marry the guy. But running away doesn't help anything. There must be *something* you can do to help your kingdom.

ADRIANA

Why is that *my* responsibility?

TÓVENA

Aren't you the princess?

ADRIANA

Yes. And you're just a...weird...hermit lady who lives alone in the forest. You couldn't possibly understand what I'm going through.

TÓVENA

I understand more than you think.

ADRIANA

What do you mean?

TÓVENA

When I was much younger...about your age, actually...I had to leave home, too.

ADRIANA

Were *you* being forced to marry a stranger, too?

TÓVENA

No. I just…I couldn't stay in my village.

ADRIANA

If you had to run away, too, then why are you giving me such a hard time?

TÓVENA

Unlike you, I ran away to help someone *else*!

ADRIANA

Are you calling me selfish?

TÓVENA

Well, you aren't thinking about anyone but yourself. Don't you realize your actions affect other people?

(A strange sound emerges from inside the cottage.)

ADRIANA

What was that?

TÓVENA

It was…my stomach.

ADRIANA

That didn't sound like your stomach.

TÓVENA

But it was. I ate a big lunch and I just have some indigestion.

(Referring to the potion she is mixing:)

That's why I'm preparing this potion. It's my medicine.

ADRIANA

But didn't you say humans can't drink that?

TÓVENA

Oh...yeah...

(Another odd sound erupts from inside the cottage.)

TÓVENA

(Futilely attempts to cover for the sound:)

Excuse me.

ADRIANA

That was definitely not you making that sound. I know I heard something from inside the cottage. What are you hiding in there?

TÓVENA

It's nothing. It's just...a friend. He's not feeling well and doesn't want any visitors.

ADRIANA

You said you lived alone.

TÓVENA

Well, that's sort of true. I just...it's...complicated.

(Another sound comes from inside the cottage, even louder this time.)

ADRIANA

I think your friend needs help.

TÓVENA

No! You can't go in there!

ADRIANA

I'm a princess. You can't tell me what to do!

TÓVENA

No! Stop! Don't go in there!

(ADRIANA begins to enter the cottage.)

ADRIANA

What is that?

TÓVENA

Wait!

(TÓVENA follows her into the cottage.)

(ADRIANA screams. Transition to…)

SCENE 4

(A clearing in the forest. RALPH and FLINT enter, screaming and covered in spider webs.)

RALPH

Get it off! Get it off! Get it off!

FLINT

I can still feel them crawling all over me!

RALPH

And looking at me with all those beady little eyes! So many eyes!

(As RALPH and FLINT continue tearing off the webs, they back into each other and scream. They finish pulling off the spider webs and catch their breath.)

RALPH

I think we got rid of them all. Are you okay?

FLINT

I think so. But...where was the dragon?

RALPH

There is no dragon down there! Just an army of giant spiders!

FLINT

Did the spiders eat the dragon?

RALPH

There was *never* a dragon down there. The princess tricked us!

FLINT

(Shocked:)

She lied to us?

RALPH

Yes! She lied to us. She was just trying to get rid of us so we wouldn't take her back to her kingdom and claim that reward.

FLINT

Well…that wasn't very nice!

RALPH

But she won't get rid of us that easy. We're going to track her down and then we'll drag her *and* that cerulean ball gown back to her kingdom.

FLINT

Can we rest for a while first? I'm awfully tired and I'm still really thirsty.

RALPH

No! She already has a big head start. We can't waste any time.

FLINT

But how will we find her?

RALPH

Look! What is that on the ground?

(FLINT kneels and examines the ground.)

FLINT

I think it's...glitter.

(FLINT has a sudden realization:)

From her fancy dress!

RALPH

I think you're right, brother. She left a trail of glitter. All we have to do is follow it and we'll find the princess!

FLINT

And then we'll claim the reward!

RALPH

And be really, really rich! Follow that glitter trail!

(*The BROTHERS exit. Transition to...)*

THIS SHOW ISN'T OVER – BUT THE SAMPLE IS!

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PRODUCTION NOTES:

Casting: This play was originally written for four actors. Each actor played one of the named characters and also served as a narrator. However, the narration can be delivered by additional actors if a director wants to expand the cast. If additional actors play the narrators, the director may re-distribute the narration as he or she thinks appropriate.

Adriana and Tóvena should be played by female actors. Ralph and Flint can be played by actors of any gender.

Spiders: The spiders can be portrayed in many ways! The original production had access to some spider hand-puppets. The narrators put these puppets on their hands and chased Adriana. Alternatively, spiders could be dropped from above or extra actors could wear spider costumes to portray the spiders.

Dragon: The original production had access to a dragon puppet. The puppet was the size of a small child and was controlled by the actor playing Tóvena. The puppet sat on the actor's shoulders and she controlled its head and neck with one arm and its tail with her other arm. A smaller (or larger) puppet would be just as effective.

Alternatively, Zemy can be played by an actor (or several actors!) in a dragon costume. This costume could be elaborate or a simple suggestion of a dragon. Perhaps all

the audience sees is Zemy's head sticking out a window. There are many creative and theatrical ways to portray the dragon!

Set: This play can be produced on a bare stage, with elaborate set pieces, or anything in between! Tóvena's cottage can either be seen on stage or the production can imply that it is just off stage. Regardless, the pacing of the show should not suffer from lengthy transitions between the scenes.

Costumes: Simple peasant- or medieval-style costumes (vests, puffy shirts, etc.) are appropriate for most of the characters. Adriana should wear a ball gown appropriate for a princess. The script calls for a blue gown; but another color may be used, too. If a different color gown is used, the production should change all references to the gown's color (i.e. if a dress is yellow, it should be called "yellow" instead of "blue" and something like "chartreuse" instead of "cerulean").

Properties: <u>SCENE 1:</u>

- Various princess jewelry (NARRATORS)
- Spiders, unless spiders are portrayed by actors (NARRATORS)

<u>SCENE 2:</u>

- Patch of dragon fur (RALPH)
- "Runaway Princess" poster (FLINT)

SCENE 3:

- Various bottles, jars, etc. with potion ingredients (TÓVENA)
- Small cauldron or pitcher for mixing ingredients (TÓVENA)

SCENE 4:

- Spider webs (RALPH & FLINT)

SCENE 5:

- Dragon puppet, unless ZEMY is portrayed by an actor (TÓVENA)
- Patch of dragon fur (RALPH)
- Small handful of glitter, matching ADRIANA's dress (FLINT)
- Two mugs or jars for drinking potion (RALPH & FLINT)

Sound: The only required sound effects are various dragon roars, bellows, groans, etc. The original production had success using the roars of a bear for Zemy's growling, talking, etc.

Though not required, the use of additional sound effects will enhance a production of this play. This could include:

- Music underscoring the first and final scenes
- Dancing music playing while the narrators describe the ball in Scene 1
- Forest sounds (howling wind, creaking branches, etc.) when Adriana escapes into the forest in Scene 1

- Stream sound effect when Adriana rests near the stream in Scene 1
- Whispering sounds prior to the spider attack in Scene 1
- Birds chirping throughout any scenes in the forest
- Transitional music between scenes, as needed
- Curtain call music
- Anything else the director or sound designer thinks will enhance the production!

ORIGINAL PRODUCTION:

The Runaway Princess of Emberfast received its world premiere at Zion Christian School in Byron Center, MI, on April 21-24, 2021. It was produced by Zion Christian School, with the following production team and performers:

Director.....Jesse Aukeman
Costume Design.....Amy Prins
Production Design.....Jesse Aukeman
Puppet Design.....Brittany Church

ADRIANA.....Anita Wielhouwer
RALPH.....Jacob Walicord
FLINT.....Trenton Schuiteman
TÓVENA.....Katie Mast
ZEMY.....Spitfire the Dragon

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