



Ever After High



Briar Beauty's  
Story



BY SHANNON HALE

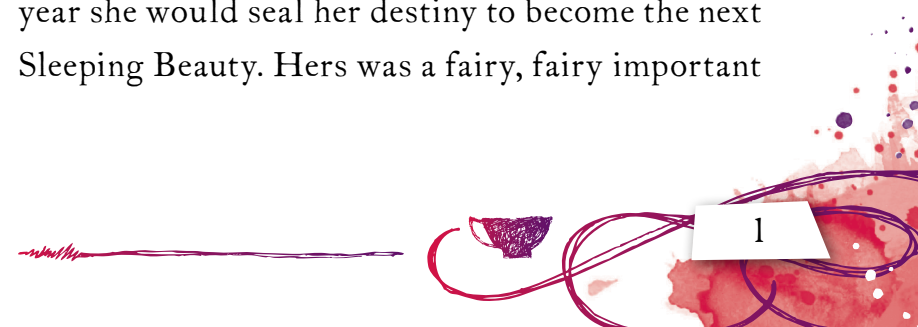


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**B**RIAR BEAUTY DID NOT TAKE PACKING  
lightly.

In her huge bedroom, she had twelve mannequins made from woven, de-thorned briar branches. She'd dressed them again and again, mixing tops and bottoms, and adding and taking away tiaras and belts. From crown-glasses to shoes, she needed to plan out each outfit she would take with her to boarding school. After all, this was her Legacy Year, the year she would seal her destiny to become the next Sleeping Beauty. Hers was a fairy, fairy important



story; all eyes would be on Briar. And she really needed to look her best.

Briar took a step back to look over her creations. Her stomach fluttered nervously. Something was still missing. She dialed her best friends forever after, Apple White and Blondie Lockes, for a MirrorChat.

“Girls! You’re looking fairest, as always,” said Briar. “How have you been?” Briar hadn’t seen her friends in two months, since their early-summer trip to Looking Glass Beach.

“I’m so excited for our Legacy Year!” said Apple. “I’m sure the hexcitement is brightening my eyes and putting a glow in my cheeks.”

“Totally. But I need your help. What do you think about these?” Briar asked, holding up her MirrorPad to the clothed briar-branch mannequins.

“Spellbinding,” said Apple.

“They are just right!” said Blondie.

“What jewelry will you use to accessorize?” Apple asked.

“Jewelry! Thank you! That’s exactly what they’re missing! I’ll call you back. The end,” said Briar.

“The end,” said Apple and Blondie, hanging up.

Briar pulled out her jewelry box from under her bed. Well, it was more of a jewelry trunk. Dashing young men were always giving her necklaces and bangles. One of the many benefits of being a princess.

Briar opened the lid. The trunk was empty.

She gasped.

“Mom!” she yelled. “Mom! We’ve been robbed! Mom! Get up here!”

No answer. Well, that was no surprise. Spending one hundred years in a magical slumber had some side effects, and Sleeping Beauty was known to doze off. Frequently. Briar just hoped her mother hadn’t fallen asleep anywhere inconvenient again. Like into her morning porridge.

Briar stepped out onto her windowsill. Jumping was the fastest way to get downstairs, not to mention a total rush. But it wasn’t until she was teetering on the edge of the sill that she noticed that the hay wagon—which was *always* right there—was *not* right there. Nothing below her but a hard cobblestone courtyard.

“Aah!” Briar said, her high-heeled shoes slipping. She gripped the curtains.

And then the worst thing possible happened. She

got that familiar yawning feeling behind her eyes. The sensation was almost like the start of a sneeze, but she knew it wasn't a sneeze because this cursed thing happened to her several times a day. Apparently her mother's dozing thing was genetic.

"Help!" Briar yelled. "Hel—"

She fell asleep.

She seemed to lose consciousness for only a split second, but when she awoke she was no longer hanging out her window. She was in the courtyard below, thankfully in her father's arms. He must have caught her just in time.

"Briar!" he said. "How many times have I told you—"

"But the hay wagon—"

"... not to jump out of—"

"... is always right there, and—"

"... windows when you have a habit of—"

"... I've been robbed!"

"What?" Her father put her down so that he could place his fists on his hips and strike a hero's pose. He might be a middle-aged king now, but he had once been the brave young prince who battled his way into Sleeping Beauty's castle. And he *never* forgot that.

"Who would dare attack us here in our cozy home?" he said, gesturing to the enormous pink marble palace. "I won't rest until I find the villains!"

He ran off.

"It was my jewelry!" Briar shouted after his father because he'd forgotten to ask what was stolen. Her father was more likely to go find some dragon to battle than locate her stolen jewelry. How in Ever After could she maintain her fashion-forward status without any jewelry? This was an epic fairy-fail!

"Mom!" she shouted.

Briar started toward the ballroom and was knocked down by three of her little brothers running past.

"Hey!" she said.

But they just kept running.

Entering the ballroom, Briar realized her brothers had had a very busy morning. About a hundred dining room chairs were stacked in teetering towers and draped with sheets and blankets. Briar doubted there was a bed left in the palace that hadn't been stripped.

"Mom! Where are you? We've been robbed!"

In the far corner, one of the blanket fort's chair towers crashed to the floor. Two more brothers had pulled the sheets off those chairs, and they ran off,

dragging the sheets behind them. Could her brothers have taken her jewelry? No, they had no use for trinkets. Besides, they seemed too busy with their blanket fort to bother with necklaces.

“Mom!”

Briar ran into the east gallery and grabbed hold of the zip line that was bolted to the ceiling. With a running start, she pushed off, zooming through the east gallery and the blue drawing room. Three more of her little brothers went swooshing by on a zip line going the other direction. Their arms were full of something black, and the music master was hollering and chasing after them—on foot. Briar shook her head. He’d never catch them.

“Where’s Mom?” she yelled after her brothers. “And have you seen any robbers?”

But they were gone.

The zip line shot her through the yellow drawing room and into the music room. There were lots of long corridors and connected rooms in the palace, so zip lines just made sense. Anyway, they were a blast to ride. Briar let go, landing on pillows on the music room floor.

Pillows lay scattered all over, ready in case the

queen or her daughter passed out without warning. But her mother wasn’t snoring on any of these cushions, and there was still no sign of robbers. What was going on?

Briar’s stomach squeaked. She’d been too nervous about packing to eat breakfast.

“Mom! Where—”

Briar heard a snore. She ran toward the west breakfast room, her high heels clicking on the marble floors. Briar was skilled at running in heels. In fact, she was so used to high-heeled shoes that in the rare moments when she was barefoot, she walked on her toes.

“Oh, Mom,” she said.

The brown-haired Beauty was sitting at the table, facedown in a plate of cold scrambled eggs, sleeping contentedly. Briar supposed eggs were less messy than porridge. She took off her sweater and draped it over her mother’s shoulders in case she was cold.

And for a split second, Briar’s heart pricked with an unusual sadness. At the grand Legacy Day ceremony that fall, Briar would sign the Storybook of Legends and magically bind herself to be the next Sleeping Beauty. Which meant she would have to

sleep for *one hundred years*. Just think of all the parties she'd miss, all the years lost with her family and Apple and Blondie. Not to mention by the time she woke up, she'd be fashion backward!

Her mother snored. She did look cozy there, so content, so sleepy....

Oh no. There was that yawning feeling behind her eyes again. Briar slapped her cheeks.

"Don't fall asleep, don't fall asleep...."

She hit the floor pillows.

Briar's spontaneous napping was a major curse, but it did have one magical advantage. As she fell deeper asleep, conversations from all around the palace and grounds began to flow through her mind like vivid dreams.

"That sheep boy is cuckoo for the milkmaid. Have you noticed?" the cook asked one of the scrub girls. "Mooning about whenever she's near...."

"Fred's not really sick," one guard whispered to another. "He's just sleepy. He was up late painting a self-portrait to send to his girlfriend...."

"I have more buried treasure!" her little brother Loyalty yelled, running into the rose garden, his hands full of—

Briar woke up with a start. *Aba!* She jumped to her feet.

"Briar?" said her mother, sitting up and picking chunks of scrambled egg off her cheek. "I think I dozed off. Where are the boys? I hope they haven't made a mess."

"Don't worry, Mom. I'll take care of it."

Briar raced to the second-floor conservatory, grabbed a zip-line handle, and flew out the window. She zipped over the courtyard and into the rose garden, landing on a feather mattress strategically placed by the fountain.

Sure enough, there was the missing hay wagon. Sheets and blankets were nailed up like sails. A black flag painted with a white skull and crossbones flew from the curtain-rod mast.

Apparently her brothers had abandoned the blanket fort and moved on to a new game. Seven of them were standing atop their hay-wagon pirate ship wearing strips of the music master's black robes tied over their heads like scarves and covering one eye. They waved wooden swords and yelled at the eighth brother, Tenacity, who was dressed all in green and perched atop the stone mermaid in the fountain.

Tenacity must have lost the draw. It was always more fun to be a pirate.

Three identical brothers shouted up to Tenacity:

“We’ll get you yet, Peter Pan!”

“How dare ye attack the good ship *Jolly Roger*!”

“We’ll make Peter Pan pie out of ye!”

“Hey!” said Briar.

The triplets startled, staring at her with their uncovered brown eyes.

“The hay wagon?” she said. “And the sheets? And the music master’s robes? Not to mention my jewelry!” She pointed to a recently uprooted rosebush. She would bet her new black satin wedges that these little pirates had buried her jewelry there. “You little thieves! How could you? You know I leave for Ever After High tomorrow.”

The boys nodded. They did know. And they didn’t seem happy about it.

“Sorry, Briar,” they said in unison.

Courage was holding the pirate flag, but he let it droop. Gallantry’s lower lip trembled. Tenacity climbed down from the statue, getting his feet wet. Honor, the littlest one, sniffed.

*Aw...* They were as cute as a nest of summer-brown bunnies. Briar couldn’t stay mad.

“Dig up my treasure, you pirates,” she said, “or I’ll have you walk the plank into crocodile-infested waters and show no mercy!”

“Yes, Briar,” they said, starting to smile.

“That’s Captain Hook to you, laddies!”

“Yes, Captain Hook!” the boys shouted, eyes bright.

“Now dig, ye scurvy grubs!” she said, tying one of the black strips over her own hair. “As soon as your captain has her treasure, we’re off to invade the kitchens!”

The boys raised their wooden swords and gave her a hearty cheer.

Briar still had a lot of outfit planning and packing to do, but there was always time for a quick pirate party.





*New York Times* bestselling author SHANNON HALE knew at age ten that it was her destiny to become a writer. She has quested deep into fairy tales in such enchanting books as *The Goose Girl*, *Book of a Thousand Days*, *Rapunzel's Revenge*, and Newbery Honor recipient *Princess Academy*. With the princely and valiant writer Dean Hale, Shannon coauthored four charming children, who are free to follow their own destinies. Just so long as they get to bed on time.



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