

KINO
INTERNATIONAL

FALLING

A film by Barbara Albert



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High-res press images – www.kino.com/press

KINO

I N T E R N A T I O N A L

FALLING

Cast

Nina – Nina Proll
Brigitte – Birgit Minichmayr
Alex – Ursula Strauss
Carmen – Kathrin Resetarits
Nicole – Gabriela Hegedüs
Daphne – Ina Strnad
Sandra (Braut) – Darina Dujmic
Norbert (Bräutigam) – Georg Friedrich

Crew

Director & Writer – Barbara Albert
Director of Photography – Bernhard Keller
Producers – Barbara Albert, Martin Gschlacht, AntoninSvoboda, Bruno Wagner
Editor – Karina Ressler
Production Designer – Katharina Wöppermann
Costume Designer – Veronika Albert
Executive Producer – Bruno Wagner
Make Up – Helene Lang and Martha Ruess
Sound – Dietmar Zuson
Sound Design – Andreas Kopriva
Sound Department – Bernhard Maisch
Casting – Sandra Bohle

FALLING

Written and Directed by Barbara Albert
(With support of Austrian Film Institute, Film Fund Vienna, ORF, ZDF/arte)
35 mm
Dolby SRD
Austria / Germany
In German with English subtitles
88 Minutes



FALLING

SHORT SYNOPSIS

Four friends - Nina, Brigitte, Alex, and Nicole, all in their early thirties - are reunited at a funeral. Nicole has come with her 12-year-old daughter, Daphne; Nina is seven months pregnant. Despite the sad occasion of this reunion, old behaviors will not stay suppressed: Nina still laughs uncontrollably at inappropriate times. And from the way they make fun of their former classmates, it's clear that the old clique is back together again.

When a laughing fit makes Nina abruptly leave the funeral reception, others join her outside. They all decide to go back and visit their old school, and unexpectedly, another old classmate and friend, Carmen, shows up to join them. Carmen is currently living in Germany, where she is working as an actress; for a while she was very successful – a 'shooting star.' Later, when the friends are standing in their old classroom, Nina remembers a slogan from their past: 'We're free!'

As such, the six women - i.e. Nina, Brigitte, Alex, Nicole, Daphne and Carmen - pile into two cars and decide to go cruising. After pulling over for a break near an outdoor festival, they stumble across Norbert, Nina's ex-boyfriend, who has just gotten married. Alcohol flows freely in the party tent, and the wedding guests celebrate raucously. But instead of dancing with his bride, Norbert kisses his old flame Nina, making the bride furious.

Afterwards, the friends decide to go to the local disco - and the bride joins them, not wanting to be around the groom. What ensues is a night of fun, unexpected coincidences and shocking revelations that will both re-unite these old friends and forever change their future.

LONG SYNOPSIS

Four friends - Nina, Brigitte, Alex, and Nicole, all in their early thirties - are reunited at a funeral. Nicole has come with her 12-year-old daughter, Daphne; Nina is seven months pregnant. Despite the sad occasion of this reunion, old behaviors will not stay suppressed: Nina starts laughing uncontrollably at the funeral itself and later at the 'funeral feast.' And from the way they make fun of their former classmates, it's clear that the old clique is back together again.

When a laughing fit makes Nina leave the reception early, the others join her outside, and they all decide to go back and visit their old school. There is a black flag hanging above the entrance, but the school itself is unlocked. The four friends are reminiscing in front of the school when another old classmate and friend, Carmen, shows up unexpectedly. Carmen is currently living in Germany, where she is working as an actress; for a while she was very successful - a 'shooting star.'

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(CONTINUED)

Nicole eyes Carmen enviously but at the same time with a look of reverence. Later, when the four women are standing in their old classroom - Brigitte and Daphne preferred to wait outside - Nina remembers a slogan from their past: 'We're free!'

As such, the six women - i.e. Nina, Brigitte, Alex, Nicole, Daphne and Carmen - pile into two cars and go cruising. They come across an outdoor festival, pull over, and stumble across Norbert, Nina's ex-boyfriend, who has just gotten married. The conversation turns to Michael, their late teacher - Brigitte gets sick and has to vomit. Dusk. A bonfire being lit. Carmen tries desperately to reach someone on her cell phone. Meanwhile in the party tent: alcohol flows freely, the wedding guests celebrate raucously, singing and in a roaring good mood, until at some point someone steals the bride. But instead of going to look for her, Norbert kisses Nina, his old flame. Finally, the angry bride comes back on her own and furiously attacks Nina. The friends decide to go to the local disco and the bride joins them, not wanting to be around the groom.

At the disco everyone continues to drink, including pregnant Nina, who orders a 'rusty nail.' While Daphne sleeps in the car, the bride strips on the dance floor. In the meantime, Norbert and his friends have shown up too. Alex is so drunk she strips with the bride, bearing her breasts. The friends find all of this extremely inappropriate, but no one tries to stop her. Not long afterwards, the bride makes out with some guy on the dance floor, and Norbert and Alex have sex in the women's restroom.

When Brigitte notices this, she goes out and sits in the dark in front of the disco. Suddenly Nicole shows up in a state of confusion. Then she gets up and dashes off into the night. The darkness frightens her, she seems confused, lost. We realize that Nicole is paranoid and - perhaps because of her medication - has begun to hallucinate. When Carmen comes out of the disco, she runs into Brigitte. They go to Carmen's car, and a very candid conversation ensues. We find out that Carmen had an affair with their teacher when she was still a teenager, and that Brigitte was having an affair with him as an adult right up until the end. Brigitte ends up crying in front of Carmen.

Suddenly Nicole throws open the car door. She wants to leave. The others manage to keep her from trying to drive away herself and then they all leave together. In the car, driving, Carmen and Daphne sing: 'Sonne' by 'Mia.' They pass the party tent and the bonfire, which is now just a pile of smoldering embers. Nina's hungry, so they stop to see if they can find anything edible in the fire. Daphne sees some kids from the party still hanging around and goes over to join them; meanwhile, Carmen and Nina talk about their friendship and relationships. In the dim morning light the tired conversation become more political and unpleasant. Brigitte confronts her friends with the fact that they no longer want to change the world and have become complacent, willing to just accept things the way they are and betraying their ideals from before. 'An alternative world already exists,' she says.

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It's light outside now and suddenly the women realize Daphne is gone. As they search for her, they pass through an old WWII dugout that leads to a place that reminds them of 'their' old clearing, their place of yearning - Kangayala. But the only one who really thinks she recognizes the clearing is Nina. She wanders to the edge of the plateau. A strong wind is blowing, the others join her; they spread their arms in the wind, and it doesn't blow them over. There, in the barren landscape, they lean into the wind, letting their bodies fall against it - for a moment they have the feeling that time is standing still.

A little while later we see Daphne and another girl dancing to loud music, the bonfire in front of them is now just a pile of ashes. When the women find them, Nicole runs up and hits her daughter out of anger and worry. Brigitte and Carmen hold Nicole back and learn from a now furious Daphne that Nicole is supposed to be back in jail by now, she had only been granted leave for Friday and Saturday.

Daphne calls her grandfather who will come and pick her up at a nearby rest stop. The women drive there, have breakfast together at Burger King. As Daphne's grandfather drives up, Daphne, who hasn't spoken a word to her mother since the incident at the fire pit, turns to go without saying good-bye. Nicole runs after her, hugs her; for a moment we see how much Nicole misses her daughter - and how much she wishes she could be closer to her. Daphne drives away.

The rest of the group is exhausted after staying up all night. Brigitte invites them to her apartment - she lied about her life at the beginning of the film. She doesn't live in Vienna, after all, in fact she never left the small town they grew up in and didn't become a photographer like she'd planned. At her place Carmen and Nina can finally talk to each other openly - and Alex kisses Brigitte. But Brigitte is shy and sad. She cries for having lost Michael, and maybe for the fleeting nature of life in general.

In the end they decide to say good-bye to their teacher Michael. They go to the cemetery. Everyone is standing around the grave. Carmen spits on his grave while Brigitte sits crying. 'For destroying my illusions - and for just checking out,' Carmen says. Then she places a ring on one of the wreaths. 'For the dreams.'

Still together, the women stop to rest for a little while at a nearby shopping center. Suddenly Nicole is knocked to the ground by members of a special police unit. They have found her via the tracking device worn around her ankle, and she wasn't allowed to see her daughter either - her custody case is still pending. Carmen confronts the officers, but in the end all she can do is shout, 'Long live freedom!' - an echo of their old ideals that at the same time seems like a whimper of helplessness in the face of the world. 'We'll see each other again,' Nina calls after her as Nicole, her eyes apathetic and vacant, is taken away.

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Nicole in her prison cell. We see her everyday life, her cellmates. Nina in a prenatal exercise class. She pauses in the middle of one of the exercises. Alex meets her boyfriend Kurt at a café. They break up. Carmen dubbing a commercial. A woman cheerfully telling the camera, 'I'm 30 and I feel good!'

A little later, Carmen at a train station. She happens to run into Ronnie, the old classmate who everyone thought had died from an overdose of heroin. 'You're not dead?' Carmen asks. 'No.' 'That's excellent.' 'I think so too,' Ronnie says.

Then, Carmen hooks up with Alex. As they sit next to each other, Carmen's phone rings, it's Nina. They really will see each other again.

Brigitte walking through the corridors of her old school. Finally she enters a classroom. She's a teacher. The students are in the middle of a discussion about capitalism and the possibility or impossibility of changing the world. A female student gives her opinion, a male student joins in the discussion. Brigitte listens.

At the end, the lonely clearing; the enchanted garden in black & white. The grass swaying in the wind.

Gustav sings: We shall overcome!

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BARBARA ALBERT – BIOGRAPHY AND FILMOGRAPHY

Born in Vienna in 1970, Barbara first studied theatre science, German language and journalism. She started with directing and screenwriting studies at the Vienna Film Academy in 1991 and worked as assistant director, script/continuity, assistant editor and acted in the feature films “*Memory of the Unknown*“, directed by Nathalie Alonso Casale (1994) and “*Crash Test Dummies*” by Jörg Kalt (2004). In 1999, she founded the film production company “coop99“ with Martin Gschlacht, Jessica Hausner and Antonin Svoboda.

Films Written and Directed by Barbara Albert

“**FALLING**” (Feature Film 2006)

“Mars” (short, 2004) Austrian Contribution of VISIONS OF EUROPE -
25 Films by 25 European Directors
Locarno Int. Film Festival 2004
Copenhagen Int. Film Festival 2004

“Böse Zellen“ (“Free Radicals“) (Feature Film) 2003
Locarno Int. Film Festival 2003, Competition
Toronto Int. Film Festival 2003
New York Film Festival 2003
London Int. Film Festival 2003
Stockholm Int. Film Festival 2003
Thessaloniki Int. Film Festival 2003 and others

„Zur Lage / State of a Nation“ (Documentary) 2002
together with Michael Glawogger, Ulrich Seidl & Michael Sturminger
Diagonale - Austrian Filmfestival 2002

“Nordrand“ („Northern Skirts“) (Feature Film) 1999
Biennale di Venezia 1999, competition
Marcello Mastroianni Prize for Nina Proll: Best young actress
Viennale 1999: Wiener Filmpreis, prize of the int. FIPRESCI-Jury
Int. Stockholm Film Festival: Best First Feature
Max-Ophüls-Film-Festival Saarbrücken 2000: Förderungspreis & best screenplay
FEMINA Preis for Christine A. Maier: Best Cinematography

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(CONTINUED)

“Slidin' - “Bright and Shiny World“ 1998

(Feature Film, Episode "TAGADA", 30 min)

Rotterdam Int. Film Festival 1999, Tiger Award competition

“Sun Spots“ (Sonnenflecken, Shortfilm) 1998

Win Femme Film Festival, Los Angeles 1999: Best Short Film

“Somewhere else“ (Documentary) 1997

“The Fruit of Thy Womb“ (Die Frucht Deines Leibes, Shortfilm) 1996

Int. Filmfestival Locarno '97: Leopards of tomorrow, Prix SSR (Germany, Austria, Switzerland)

Rencontres Internationales Henri Langlois Festival du Film, Poitiers: Le Prix Spécial du Jury

Krakow International Short Film Festival: The Jury's Diploma of Honour

31st Humboldt International Film Festival, Arcata '98: Best Film of the Festival, Best

International Film

“Nachtschwalben“ („Nightjars/Swallows of the Night“) (Shortfilm) 1993

Max Ophüls-Preis Saarbrücken '94: best shortfilm 1994

Screenplays

“Auswege“

Director: Nina Kusturica, 2003

Berlin 2004, Perspektiven des jungen Films

Co-Writer

“Grbavica“ (2005)

Director: Jasmila Zbanic

“Das Fräulein“ (2004)

Writer, Director: Andrea Staka (CH)

“Slumming“ (2003)

Writer, Director: Michael Glawogger

“Struggle“ (2003)

Writer, Director: Ruth Mader

Cannes 2003, Un Certain Regard