

The Cinderella Story

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Prologue

Scene: *A room in the Queen's Place in the Kingdom of Sudonia . This Scene Should be Played against a Background of curtains so that there is as little delay as possible between the prologue and the act .It may be furnished at the producer's discretion, and should resemble a waiting room, with a settee and armchairs, etc., plus a small table bearing a telephone, right.*

The Pressman is seated in one of the armchairs, turning over the pages of a magazine .middle aged, experienced in his profession, he is nevertheless slightly overawed by the occasion, and is little nervous. The Queen's Secretary enters, left. Pressman rises hopefully. The Secretary is elderly, angular, and dignified to the point of severity. She conveys infinite condescension in her very speech.

SECRETARY: I am Sorry, the Queen is still resting . I doubt whether she will be able to see you for some little while yet.

PRESSMAN: I hope I may wait.

SECRETARY: Certainly: Her Majesty is always pleased to receive foreign journalists, especially those from a country as highly esteemed by Her Majesty as your own. She was instructed me to offer you some refreshment. Would that be Acceptable?

PRESSMAN: Thank you –most kind – but I won't put you to that trouble . I dined well at the airport. Er- you did say I might use your phone—

SECRETARY: of course : please do so Whenever you like.

PRESSMAN: Thank you : I'm greatly obliged. I'll do so right away.[Nervously Talkative] I have not seen much of Sudonia so far, naturally, but believe me I'm already deeply impressed with the way the personality of the fabulous ~~deeply impressed with the way personality of the fabulous~~ Queen Cinderella dominates your country. A wonderful old lady, ma'am-I speak respectfully –a very wonderful old lady .those great pictures of her in every square – they cry out to the foreign visitor of the love and devotion of your nation.

SECRETARY: [with the slightest trace of irony]: Yes. They are calculated so to do.

PRESSMAN: To be Sure - a token to a royal lady who has long been a beautiful legend. I would like to say as much to my paper. And- would it be presuming too much, ma'am, to ask if you have any personal reminiscences of the Queen which I might quote ? you have been secretary for so long—

SECRETARY: I am afraid I cannot do that. Her Majesty has servants: she does not have them interviewed.

PRESSMAN: I'm Sorry – I meant no offence.

SECRETARY[less coldly]: please don't apologize. The request was natural. I'm sorry I can't grant it.[After a slight pause] The queen likes to make personally all statements to the press which concern herself. She is thus in less danger of being... misrepresented.

PRESSMAN: Ah.. Very wise.

SECRETARY[dryly]: It is indeed . And now if you will excuse me, I will leave you to your telephone call. I will return as soon as ever Her Majesty is pleased to receive you.

PRESSMAN: Thank you very much indeed, ma'am. [Exit Secretary. He goes to Phone operator]— I want an overseas call, please, to the republic of Erstwhile ... thanks.... Hallo ?... yes, please, I Want Mayhem 4747... I'll hold on...

[Enter Lavinia. She is a white – haired, sweet old lady of sixty- nine.]

F **LAVINIA**: [in an excited whisper]: Honoria! It's him! Come quickly!

F **HONORIA**[in a fruity contralto, off]: Good! I'm coming.

[Enter HONORIA. Seventy-one, She is stouter and redder- faced than Lavinia, but yet a handsome woman.]

PRESSMAN[at phone]: Hallo? ... Yes, it's me alright. Yes, I m right inside the place. I want a stenographer—Millie for preference... Ah, Millie?... You know who's speaking, don't you?... Well, look, I haven't seen Queen Cinderella yet, and it may be some time before I do, so we'll put in a column about sudonia celebrates Anniversary... Am I impressed? I was never so moved in my life ... No, really , I'm serious----- these huge crowds---all so happy, all rejoicing ... you wish you were here? All right I'll bring you Next time... What? Oh., well, naturally, I'll bring my wife as well ... yes all right, dear, but this is an expensive call: let's get to work, shall we? Ready? Good....

[He Sees the sister, who are by now on either said of him .] ----No, wait a bit, Millie--- I think I,m summoned. I,ll call you back-----

LAVINIA: NO--- no—do go on.

PRESSMAN: Millie!--- Oh, She's rung off.

LAVINIA: oh, I am sorry . that was our fault, I'm afraid.

PRESSMAN: it's of no consequence, I assure you. Did you ladies wish to speak to me?

LAVINIA [with a glance at her sister]: well, as a matter of fact we did —but we'd get into dreadful trouble if anyone found out.

HONORIA: We're going to risk that. I believe you are a journalist, Sir?

PRESSMAN: yes, from the Erstwhile Daily World.

HONORIA : Well, The Erstwhile Daily World can have the story of a lifetime straight from the horse's mouth, if you care to hear it.

PRESSMAN: That's generous of you, ma'am, but to whom have I the honour of speaking?

LAVINIA: we, sir, are the legitimate daughters of Cinderella's step mother.

PRESSMAN: The daughters but , I say, that means you must be ----

LAVINIA [gently] : Well? What must we be?

PRESSMAN: Well—excuse me, but – the ugly Sister!

HONORIA: Quite right. We're the ugly Sister Fifty years older now, and a bit shop—soiled.

PRESSMAN: But, really---you embarrass me, ladies.

HONORIA: It's been embarrassing for us, being called ugly all lives. Rather discouraging to any possible beau, you know.

PRESSMAN : But this is image ! you are not ugly ---in fact if I may say so----

HONORIA: Oh, don't bother we're past caring. All the same, you've learned something new --- the ugly Sister aren't ugly and fifty years ago we were even less so—I was bit hefty, but a healthy specimen, and Leavia here was a sweetheart.

The Prince was crazy about her.

PRESSMAN: Who? The late King, you mean?

LEVINIA: That's right .the one who married Cinderella.

PRESSMAN: He was in actual fact in love with you?

LAVINIA: He said he was, and I 've never had reason to doubt his word.

PRESSMAN: Then why ---?

LAVINIA: Ah, it's a long story.

PRESSMAN: It must be. Very different from the one that's gone round the world all these years.

LEVINIA: Round the world? so far, really.

PRESSMAN: Yes, indeed. It's even reached Britain.

HONORIA: Britain?

PRESSMAN: A Small island off the coasts of Europe.

HONORIA: Never heard of it.

PRESSMAN: Dreadful place --- the natives charges at one another in chariots with knives sticking out of the wheels, I'm told but even they have their own primitive Version of the Cinderella legend.

LEVINIA: the Authorized Version.

PRESSMAN: There's only one legend, to myKnowledge.

HONORIA: That's just it. We never leave this place. We've seen many journalists here, but we've never been able to get at them before. ^{Ben} Ben past caring, too. NO use ranking up old score. But now that we're in sight of the grave---

PRESSMAN: Come, come-----

LEVINIA: Honoria's right. She's seventy- one and I'm Sixty- Nine. That does not leave us so long.

HONORIA: Now, as I say, we realize that our time's running out, we feel that we must tell the truth to someone.

LEVINIA: You will listen, won't you?

PRESSMAN: of course I'll listen, but---

LEVINIA: That is nice of you. We love taking. Well, now, you must imagine that we are fifty years younger--- not much more than girls----

[*The lights fade slowly.*]

HONORIA [*removing her grey wig*]: our hair wasn't grey--- mine was brown----

LEVINIA [*removing her wig*]: Mine was golden---

HONORIA [*removing her housecoat*]: our clothes were in the height of fashion-----

LEVINIA [*removing her housecoat*]: That they were----

PRESSMAN: Yes?

LEVINIA: **Well, now** --- one morning I came into the kitchen--- Cinderella sitting in the fireplace, as usual---- moping---

Slow Curtain

Scene Two

The Baroness's Kitchen Cinderella, in rags huddles in the chimney, right. She is a slight, pretty girl, with great wistful eyes. Her normal expression is petulant, but she can resort to spaniel- like pathos when necessary. Enter LAVINIA. Not seeing CINDERELLA, she goes cautiously to the door and peeps out.

CINDERELLA: your shoes are under the table, Lavinia.

LAVINIA [*starting violently*]: Oh, Cinders you startled me. I didn't see you.

CINDERELLA: your shoes ---- they're under the table.

LAVINIA [*a trifle bewildered*]: My shoes? Oh, yes, so they are.

CINDERELLA: I've cleaned them for you.

LAVINIA: Oh, Oh yes, so you have. Well, thanks. It really wasn't necessary, you know--- but still, thanks.

CINDERELLA: And what do you wish me to do for you now?

LAVINIA: Do Nothing.

CINDERELLA: yes, yes, you must let me serve you.

LAVINIA: Cinders, please don't talk like that. It makes one feel awkward. Why ever should you keep doing things for me?

I'm perfectly capable of looking after myself.

CINDERELLA: you know that my position here---

LAVINIA: Now, look here. You know jolly well that mother, with her desperate longing to be strictly fair, has always favored you just because you're not her daughter, so far goodness' sake don't talk such rubbish.

CINDERELLA: Abuse me, go on : I can't defend myself.

LAVINIA: oh----! Cinders me, I honestly believe you're ill. Mentally ill, I mean. No one normal would behave as you do--- dressing like that when you've got a trunkful of decent frocks upstairs,

CINDERELLA: It isn't kind, frightening me with terms I can't understand-taking advantage of your superior education. I don't go to college-

LAVINA [*angrily*]: And why not? Because you played the little ninny at school, that's why, and faked all your exams pretending to be ill.

CINDERELLA: I see. I was pretending then, but now, to suit your convenience, I'm really ill.

LAVINA: You're deliberately twisting my words, you know you are!

CINDERELLA: I'm afraid I'm not clever enough to follow that, Lavinia dear. Perhaps if I had the advantages of higher education.

LAVINA: Perhaps then you'd see what a beastly little poseuse you are!

CINDERELLA: How valuable! And I'd meet all kinds of interesting people, too, wouldn't I? Rich ones, too, and great-like the Prince.

LAVINA: You leave the Prince out of this!

CINDERELLA: Oh yes, of course- I shouldn't have mentioned him, should I? As his fellow-undergraduate, I suppose you have a major claim to him?

LAVINA: How dare you! How dare you!

CINDERELLA: Oh, I'm sorry if I've touched a tender spot. I should have known why you were looking so anxiously out of that door. We're expecting a royal visit, are we?

LAVINA: We, my good Cinderella, are expecting nothing. What I may do is my own business.

CINDERELLA: [*by now wholly venomous*]: But mightn't it be a little awkward, doing your billing and cooing with your ragged poor relation huddling in the cinders, watching you? I'm sure the Prince wouldn't approve. They tell me he's a very idealistic young man, and an ardent social reformer. [*The GODMOTHER, unseen by LAVINIA, but seen by CINDERELLA enters CINDERELLA immediately changes her tone to one of meek submissiveness.*]

LAVINA: Why, you rotten little bitch!

CINDERELLA: Please, dear sister, don't abuse me so

LAVINA: Oh, for Heaven's sake don't go back on that tack again.

Abuse you! If you dare open your mouth again I- I'll take that ridiculous broom of yours and break it over your head.

CINDERELLA: [*piteously*] oh, no no! oh won't someone help me please?

GODMOTHER [*stepping forward*]: Don't be frightened, my darling. [*Both girls start, Lavinia in genuine, Cinderella in feigned surprise. To Lavinia*] Ah, you didn't expect me to come in through the kitchen, did you, miss? Yes, you may well blush, my girl. I heard what you were saying. A fine way to speak to your sister!

LAVINA: Godmother-you don't understand-

GODMOTHER: I think I can understand what I hear with my own ears, Lavinia. I never heard anything like it in my life- cursing like a harriidan and threatening the child with violence-

CINDERELLA: Please, Godmother, I don't think dear Lavinia quite knew what she was saying.

LAVINA: I jolly well did.

GODMOTHER: Indeed! Cinderella, my poor sweet forgiving lamb, what can you know of the Seven Deadly Sins? You know to which sin I refer, Lavinia? Wrath, my girl, wrath-yes, and Pride

and Envy too, I'll be bound. Well, you're not too big for me to give you a good smacking, my lady, so take care!

LAVINA:[beside herself with fury]: You try it, that's all You damned well try it!

[Enter BARONESS: matronly, charming, competent.]

BARONESS: Whatever is this commotion all about?

GODMOTHER: Ask Lavinia. She has so far cursed and sworn like a navy at both myself and this poor child, and has threatened both of us with violence.

BARONESS: Oh, Lavinia, really-

GODMOTHER: 'Oh, Lavinia ,really!' I know what I'd do if she were my child.

LAVINA: Mother, please-

BARONESS: [*mildly*]: Lavinia, it's always silly to lose your temper.

It puts you in the wrong whether you're three or not. And ~~that scene I overheard was rather vulgar, wasn't it?~~

That scene I over head was rather vulgar, wasn't it?

LAVINA: I'm sorry, Mother.[She begins to leave kitchen.]

CINDERELLA: [*sweetly*]: Lavinia, dear, do take your shoes. I've cleaned them for you.

LAVINA: In that case I wouldn't be seen dead in them. [Exit]

GODMOTHER: Oh! You saw that? Is there no way this poor little thing can appease the vixen? Why, it's pathetic!

BARONESS: Yes, very. Cinderella, why exactly did you clean Lavinia's shoes? Buttons would have done them for her if she'd wanted him to. After all, we pay him for that sort of thing.

CINDERELLA: No, no, Stepmother, I wouldn't like to give any more work to dear, faithful Buttons.

BARONESS: Dear, faithful Buttons has a cushy job here, and well you know it. But in any case, I'm sure Lavinia would clean her own shoes, if necessary. She's not lazy, to my knowledge. And now, Cinders, my dear, I want you to do something for me.

CINDERELLA: [*jumping up*]: Certainly, Stepmother dear!

GODMOTHER: I hope you're not overworking the child, Letitia!

BARONESS: I hope that you will allow me to run my own family, Lysistrata. [*To Cinderella*] It's just this-will you please go upstairs and change into some respectable clothes? Those you have on are a disgrace.

CINDERELLA: [*with some reluctance*]: If you wish it, Stepmother.

BARONESS: Of course I wish it. You look like a tramp. Run along, now.

GODMOTHER: Come, my darling, I'll help you choose your dress if I'm allowed to, of course.

BARONESS: Of course, of course. [Exeunt GODMOTHER and CINDERELLA.] And perhaps you might choose a nice windowsill and throw yourself off it.[*Sighing.*] Oh, dear, families! [Enter HONORIA.]

Hallo, dear. How did the hockey practice go?

HONORIA: well, the new lot are just about as bad as they could be, without being actually arless or legless. I came in this way because my shoes are filthy.

BARONESS: Are they? Well, will you please clean them as soon as possible?

HONORIA: Yes, all right. Why?

BARONESS: If you don't Cinderella will probably decide to serve you, as she puts it, by cleaning them for you, and I want to avoid that.

HONORIA: Oh, Lord! Is she still playing that game?

BARONESS: She is.

HONORIA: I wonder what she's up to? Perhaps she's a bootfetichist.

BARONESS: You psychology student! Whatever's a boot-whatever-you-said?

HONORIA: Boot-fetichist. Well, it's a person who craves to clean other people's shoes, owing to a morbid affliction of the nerves-nearly always sexual. A perversion, in popular terminology.

BARONESS: Oh, I see. No, I don't think Cinderella's one of those.

HONORIA: Some sort of exhibitionist, anyway

BARONESS: Yes, she was exhibiting altogether too much in those awful rags she put on this morning. I sent her to change. I wish I knew what she's up to.

[A knock at the door]

HONORIA: That'll be Buster.

BARONESS: Do you mean the Prince?

HONORIA: Yes. He's come for Lavinia..[Calling at Wings left.]

Lavinia! He's here!

BARONESS: [as the knock is repeated]: Let him wait. This friendship worries me. The daughter of a minor Baron is never going to make a Queen, and I don't want my girl's heart broken.

HONORIA: Oh, they're just good pals.

BARONESS: Oh! Don't they teach you about people at that college?

[Enter LAVINIA]

HONORIA: [to LAVINIA]: He's arrived. [Heavy knocking.] I say, your eyes are all red.

LAVINIA: Hay fever.

HONORIA: [doubtfully]: Rotten luck, old girl [Exeunt HoNORIA and BARONESS.]

[Lavinia opens door.]

Prince [entering]: Hallo, darling! I thought you were all out. [Taking her shoulders.] Hey, what's this? Have you been crying?

LAVINIA: No.

PRINCE: Yes, you have. What's upset you? The sweet little step-sister again?

LAVINIA: Yes.

PRINCE: What complex has she got now?

LAVINIA: I don't know. She's taken to dressing in rags.

PRINCE: Go on? A form of masochism, perhaps?

LAVINIA: She just likes drawing attention to herself.

PRINCE: Well, forget her. {Taking her in his arms.} I have sensational news-

LAVINIA [repulsing him]: No, Buster. No, don't.

PRINCE: What's this? You really are upset, aren't you?

LAVINIA: Buster, I've got to talk seriously to you. I know we're just good friends and there's nothing in it and all that, but I'm a human being, and I just can't-

PRINCE: Who says there's nothing in it? [Pause.] Who are just good friends? I love you. Is that clear? I love you, and want to marry you.

LAVINIA: Don't be an idiot.

PRINCE: Now look here-

LAVINIA: You're so irresponsible! How long do you think this- this charade of being an ordinary college boy is going to last? You're the future king, Buster; you know jolly well you can't marry me. You'll marry royalty and settle down to producing sons and heirs. They won't be my children! They won't be mine!

PRINCE: Ah, but-

LAVINIA: No, I'll be lucky to be one of Her Majesty's ladies-in-waiting. Ha, I'll lace her beastly stays so tight she'll go black in the face! Or does a lady-in-waiting do that sort of thing?

PRINCE: May I please get listen carefully while I speak in words of one syllable? I'm going to marry you-if you'll have me.

LAVINIA: Oh, Buster, darling.

PRINCE: It's like this. My father's a democrat. That's why I'm an irresponsible student at a public university. He wants a grandchild; he's getting on, you know. So-I must get married. We're agreed that's essential. A State-arranged marriage with foreign royty? Not a bit of it. Father's a democrat and a patriot.

LAVINIA: Well?

PRINCE: Well ; he proposes to hold a Royal Ball which any girl in the kingdom may attend, and to marry me to the one I dance with the most.

LAVINIA [laughing in spite of herself]: Oh, but that's preposterous! How many million girls do you expect to entertain?

PRINCE: Ah, his democratic spirit is well in check, really. No one of rank lower than a Baronetcy may attend.

LAVINIA: Oh.

PRINCE: But that let's you in, doesn't it?

LAVINIA: [breathlessly]: When is this ball, Buster?

PRINCE: Any week now. I'm going to dance with you so persistently that they'll take us for Siamese twins.

LAVINIA: Oh!-Oh! No, it's too good to be true... Darling, I'm going to cry.

PRINCE: [tenderly]: What, again? You're not one of these weepy women, I hope? A Queen must wear a smile, you know.

LAVINIA: Don't make fun, Buster, not now.

PRINCE: Where is your mother? I want to tell her about this I have a feeling she doesn't trust me, and I'd like my future mother-in-law to know I'm on the square.

LAVINIA: Ought you to? I mean, are you absolutely certain about it, Buster? Because-

PRINCE: Of course, of course I'm certain. Where is she?

LAVINIA: Somewhere in the house.

PRINCE: Come on, then. I mustn't stay long, or the blasted newspaper men will track me here, and I don't want that to happen.

Mustn't let it be thought that my democratic marriage is frame-up.

LAVINIA: Slip out through the kitchen again.

PRINCE: Yes, I will. Come on. [Exeunt both]

[Slight pause. Enter GODMOTHER AND CINDERELLA, who is wearing a pretty frock.]

GODMOTHER: Now, don't you let them force you into that nasty chimney-corner again, my darling.

CINDERELLA: I'm afraid they will, Godmother dear. They'll make me take this frock off, too. Stepmother only told me to put it on to impress you.

GODMOTHER: Oh, you poor, poor child. Is there nothing I can do to help you?

CINDERELLA: Just one tiny thing, dear GODMOTHER.

[Her voice, though still meek, has a note of purpose which the Godmother has never heard before.]

GODMOTHER [curiously]: And what is it, my love?

CINDERELLA: Will you please go out and collect as many Press photographers as you can, and bring them here?

GODMOTHER: But, my darling, really ---- what a strange request!

CINDERELLA [sweet, but with Significance]: the prince is in this house, godmother, dear.

GODMOTHER [after a longish pause]: Cinderella---

CINDERELLA: yes?

GODMOTHER: if—if you should even find yourself... in as suddenly exalted position ... my dearest girl... you would not forest your old godmother, would you, pet?

CINDERELLA [steadily]: if ever that happened she would also be in an exalted position, dearest godmother.

GODMOTHER [decisively]: I'll do what you wish at once.

CINDERELLA [as GODMOTHER turns to go]: And, GODMOTHER, dear, when you return, will you ring the front door bell, and then bring the photographers round here to the kitchen as soon as you can?

GODMOTHER: I will, my darling [Exit]

CINDERELLA [hard as nails]: And don't bungle it, you old cow.[Enter PRINCE]

CINDERELLA [sinking to the floor in a curtsy]: your Highness.

PRINCE [coolly]: Hallo, Cinderella. Don't do that it's not necessary. Excuse me, won't you . I'm just off.

CINDERELLA: Of course, your Highness. The photographer are waiting for you.

PRINCE[startled]: Are they? Where?

CINDERELLA: Outside.

PRINCE: Hell! Do they know I'm here?

CINDERELLA: I don't think they're certain, your Highness. They seem to be just hanging about in hope.

PRINCE: Fools! Have they nothing better to do? Well, they mustn't see me, that's certain. If you allow me, I'll wait here for a while.

CINDERELLA: Of course, your Highness. Please sit down. I'll go back to my chimney- corner, out of your way.

PRINCE: But ---[Curiously.] I say, must you? There seem to be plenty of chairs to sit on.

CINDERELLA: I belong in the chimney-corner, your Highness.

It is my place.

PRINCE: How peculiar. Won't that nice dress get dirty?

CINDERELLA: This dress? Oh, it's not me, this dress ---- just disguise for the poor things I am. I'll take it off.[pulls dress over her head.]

PRINCE[alarmed]: Her—steady---

CINDERELLA[now seen to be wearing her rags underneath]: there, your highness. I'm now dressed as I ought to be---in my rags.

PRINCE[sharply]: But why on earth should you be? No one wants you to. Why do you carry on like this?

[CINDERELLA stares piteously at him for several moments. she then speaks with a startling change of tone.]

CINDERELLA: Oh, you're right, you're right! [throwing herself into a chair, burying her head in her arms.] I'm a beastly little pose use, that's what I am! I hate myself! [Sobbing.] I hate myself!

PRINCE[troubled]: Oh, please don't distress yourself--- I'm sorry---

CINDERELLA[passionately]: No, no, you're right! I just act like this to upset everyone, and I hate my life for it! They're all so good to me here--- Stepmother ---the girls--- especially Lavinia, she's sweet to me--- and this is how I repay them! I hate my---self!

PRINCE: Well, that's hard luck, but surely you can stop it if you want to, can't you?

CINDERELLA: That's just it, I can't Haven't you heard of cases like mine? you're a psychologist---a brilliant student---

PRINCE: I'm not, you know. I'll be lucky to get a third-class.

CINDERELLA: still, you know all about psychology. Don't you think I might have a---a--- persecution complex, or something ?

PRINCE: Well, yes, that's possible.

CINDERELLA: Then will you please, Please tell me how to lose it?

PRINCE: I'm afraid I can't. We're still doing theory haven't tackled therapy yet. Honoria might help. She's done therapy.

CINDERELLA: Ah, no: my relationship with Honoria is too subjective. You do see that?

PRINCE: I see your point. Well, you could come to see us at the collage.

CINDERELLA: And be pulled about by all the students? I should be even more maladjusted than ever.

PRINCE: Well, I don't know Do you have any dreams? We're Just doing dreams.

CINDERELLA: Dreams? Oh yes .Full of strange symbols.

PRINCE: That's the ticket. Tell me one.

Cindrella: The sitting in the chimney-cornor, and there are mice playing round my feet. There's a huge pumpkin on the table--

Prince [soberly]: Significant. That's significant.

Cindrella: Yes, Morbid, isn't it?

Prince: Very. Go on

Cindrella: The house is empty. My sisters and stepmother have gone off to a Ball, laughing and jeering at me because I must stay at home in my rags. I am weeping. Suddenly my Godmother appears before me --

Prince: Ah! Huggish? Afigure of horror?

Cindrella: Funnily enough, no. She comes asa Fairy, beautiful and radiant.

Prince: But still recognizable?

Cindrella: Yes.

Prince: A miracle of the Unconscious Mind.

Cindrella: She smiles, and waves her wand. Everything is transferred! I'm wearing a superb evening gown, and glass slippers; the mice turn into horses, and the pumpkin into a magnificent golden coach, which positively fills the room. There are some frogs that turn into coachmen. And there it is, my coach and four, ready to take me to the Ball ---

Prince: How do you get it out of the kitchen?

Cindrella [just a little impatiently]: Oh, really, I don't know. This is a dream, you know. Anyway, I'm taken to the Ball, all evening I'm dancing with a rich, handsome young man. He is in love with me. We dance and dance; then we sit one out; he takes my hand; passion rises---

Prince: I say, yes?

Cindrella: Then the clock strikes twelve.

Prince [disappointed]: Oh, Does that matter?

Cindrella: Yes, it seems very important. I'm seized with panic. I jump up and run away, and then I'm running, running back home in my rags, with one glass slipper missing, , and then I wake up.

Prince: H'm.The symbol of the shoe is very persistent, isn't it?

Cindrella: Yes. I'm waiting for the shoe to be on the other foot.

Prince: I'm not sure I follow that

Cindrella: I hope you will, in time.

Prince: Well, let's think about this. My analysis, I think, would be that yours is a case of wish fulfillment, strongly enforced with inferiority-complex.

Cindrella: Marvellous! But the cure, your Highness? The treatment?

Prince: You've got me there.

Cindrella: Hypnosis, do you think?

Prince: Perhaps.

Cindrella: Can you hypnotize people?

Prince: I've never tried. I've seen it done.

Cindrella: How is it done?

Prince: Oh, well, the hypnotist stares into the patient's eyes--- like this--- and repeats some phrase over and over again, you know, like, 'You're going to sleep and forget, sleep and forget, sleep and forget'—see?

Cindrella [drowsily]: I see.

Prince: Mind you, it takes an expert to bring it off....[with sudden alarm] Here, are you all right? [Snaps fingers before her face] Cinderella! Wake up! Good Lord, I haven't the faintest idea how to get you out of this! Conderella! Stand up! Snap out of it! [Cindrella rises, arms outstretched, as if sleep-walking, and advances upon him.] Shades of the Sorcerer's Apprentice! [Dodging round table.] Whoever would have thought you'd drop off as easily as that! [Sounds of the front door bell. CINDERELLA quickens pace.]

Cindrella: there's someone coming—please wake up!

[He takes her shoulders and shakes her, gingerly,. She responds by wrapping him tightly in her arms. As this happens, the door opens, and the GODMOTHER enters with a crowd of press photographers. There should be as many of these as possible.]

Cindrella: Of Course I'll marry you—darling?

[Kisses him on the mouth. The photographers, uttering cries of joy, are taking pictures from every conceivable angle.]

GODMOTHER: [Sinking into a low curtsy]: Oh, your Highness! Oh, Cinderella, my dear, my very dear girl!

[Enter BARONESS, HONORIA, and LAVINIA.]

BARONESS

HONORIA } [Together]: What is the name of goodness—Well, I'm dashed--- Buster!!!

LAVINIA

PRINCE [over Cinderella's shoulder]: Now look here, I can explain everything---

A PHOTOGRAPHER: Please you highness. Your story!

[General eager chorus from photographers.]

PRINCE[wildly, wrestling with Cinderella]: Get out! Get out, You lot!

PHOTOGRAPHER: Yes, your Highness! At once, your Highness! Come on ,we've got the pictures!

GODMOTHER [shepherding them out]: I'll tell you everything gentlemen--- the whole romance, from start to finish!

PRINCE: Don't you say anything, d'you hear? Don't you----

LAVINIA[grieved and furious]: Isn't it rather late to start shouting now?

PRINCE: Late? Shouting? Are you all mad here? Can't any one pull this—this psychopath off me?

CINDERELLA: Darling!

LAVINIA[struggling with her]: Let him go! Let him go!

HONORIA: Steady on, old girl! I mean to say---

BARONESS[imperiously]: Be quiet ! Be quiet, all of you ! [Abrupt silence. CINDERELLA releases prince, who sinks to the floor.] Now, your Highness: you have, you say, something to explain to us?

PRINCE[temporarily unhinged]: yes. She went for a ride in a pumpkin---

HONORIA: Is this a limerick or something?

PRINCE: drawn by mice---

LAVINIA[to Cinderella, furiously]: He's gone mad! What have you done to him?

PRINCE: one glass slipper--- very significant---

LAVINIA[sobbing]: He's mad! He's mad!

PRINCE[with a burst of anger]:mad, confound you!

PRINCE Will you listen---

HONORIA [together] steady, old girl,

BARONESS I can't make head or tail of---

LAVINIA stop saying 'steady old girl'---!

[sudden silence.]

CINDERELLA[sweetly poisonous]: I think, you know, you'd all better listen to me

[Silence again.]

In fact, unless I'm much mistaken, you're all going to be listening to me from now on. The shoe's on the other foot, your Highness, do you follow me? On the other foot---

SLOW CURTAIN

Epilogue

Scene: as in prologue, pressman, Lavinia, Honoria, discovered.

LAVINIA: Well, that's not the whole story, but it was beginning of the end. Pictures of Cinderella embracing the prince appeared in every paper in the kingdom, and what was described as 'the full story' filled them all.

HONORIA: They differed from paper to paper, the stories.

LAVINIA: yes, but they all made the same point: the prince was going to marry Cinderella.

PRESSMAN: But what did the prince have to say?

HONORIA: What did his father have to say! He nearly had apoplexy.

LAVINIA: yes, he talked of banishing us all, and the prince with us. It was an anxious period for Cinderella. Then she got an audience with him.

PRESSMAN: And talked him round?

LAVINIA: In about ten minutes. We'd underrated her, you know. What a saleswoman!

PRESSMAN: Anyway, the king was charmed with her. called her his little daughter, and said that no son of his was going to betray the trust of an innocent maiden.

HONORIA: The Prince's face was a picture.

LAVINIA: yes: A stag At bay. What could he do? You don't throw away a kingdom lightly, and either had to do that or marry Cinderella.

PRESSMAN: So the fabulous Ball never really took place?

LAVINIA: Oh, yes, it did. Shall I ever forget that night!

HONORIA: Cinderella's Engagement Ball, it was. The high-spot was her speech.

LAVINIA: Yes, she actually had the impudence to tell them that idiotic dream of hers about pumpkins and mice and things, and how it had all come true, and-do you know-

PRESSMAN: I know. Before you could look round, everyone believed it had really happened.

LAVINIA: Yes: how did you guess?

PRESSMAN: I've been a journalist for thirty years. I know what people will believe. What became of you two?

HONORIA: We were commanded by the Queen, our stepsister, to live in the Palace. An act of regal forgiveness, said the papers. She didn't want us out of her sight.

PRESSMAN: And the Godmother?

HONORIA: Ah, she died soon afterwards. She was poisoned.

[pause.] She knew too much, you know.

PRESSMAN [*appealed*]: Good God!

[The telephone rings.]

HONORIA: Hallo? Yes, he's here. Hold on, please. It's for you.

PRESSMAN: [taking phone]: Thank you. I can't get over the cruelty of making you live in the same house with the man you loved.

LAVINIA: It may be that Cinderella made a mistake in doing that.

The Prince was very much in love with me, you know, always was. Do answer that phone, now-it's your paper. Tell them the truth. Goodbye.

PRESSMAN: Goodbye, ladies, and thank you very much. [Exeunt SISTERS] Hallo?.... Yes, speaking... Who? The editor? ... No, sir, I haven't got my interview yet... Well, I'm sorry, but I can't tell the Queen to get a move on, can I?.. Have I anything to give you to get on with? Yes, enough to send us to war with Sudonia, I should think. That business about the mice turning into horses- seems to be phoney, after all. I've always had my doubts, haven't you? Well, look: briefly: Cinderella has been debunked. She was the ugly sister, not the other two. One of the sisters seems to have been the late King's mistress, by the way. How's that to be getting on

with?...What ? Oh, I see. We dare not print anything controversial. You want the usual legend plus trimmings ... Yes, I understand. Best to be on the safe side...

[Enter SECRETARY.]

Just one moment, sir.

SECRETARY: Her Majesty will see you now.

PRESSMAN: Thank you very much.*[Into phones]* Well, I'm going to see the Queen now... Yes, as soon as I can. The old sweet story... Nothing altered. Very good, sir... Yes...yes, sir... Yes.

Goodbye for now.*[Replaces phone]* Lead on, ma'am.

I am ready to be enchanted.

[They go out as the curtain falls]