

**PLEASE BE AWARE THAT
THIS PLAY IS FULLY PROTECTED BY COPYRIGHT**

All plays, books, music and other materials published by Heartland Plays, Inc. are fully protected under the copyright laws of the United States of America and all countries which the United States has reciprocal relations including, but not limited to all countries covered by the Pan-American Copyright Convention, The Universal Copyright Convention and the Berne Convention. All rights to the plays and materials on our website are strictly reserved including, and without limitation, professional and amateur performance rights; motion pictures; public reading; radio and television broadcasting; audio and video recording and reproduction of any type known or yet to be invented; information storage and retrieval systems of any type known or yet to be invented; and the rights of translation into any and all languages. No individual or organization whether amateur or stock may perform this or any play published by Heartland Plays, Inc. without first obtaining advance permission from Heartland Plays, Inc. and paying the appropriate fees including Royalties and Single-Use Copyright fees. Heartland Plays, Inc. collects royalties on behalf of the Playwrights whose plays it publishes. Unauthorized copying, transcribing or reproduction of this or any play or excerpt, or storage or transmittal in any form and by any means whether known or yet to be invented, is strictly forbidden except as provided by Agreement with Heartland Plays, Inc. Any unauthorized use is a violation of copyright laws and will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law.

FIVE SIMPLE RULES TO REMEMBER

1. DO take advantage of the free online perusal of our plays to help you make the best choice for your particular needs or production.
2. DO enjoy the convenience of our online purchase application for performance rights and single-use copyright.
3. DO understand that this play and all plays and materials on our website are controlled by Heartland Plays, Inc. and fully protected by copyright.
4. DO NOT attempt in any way to copy, transcribe or reproduce this play by any means or perform this play or use any play or material from our website without first receiving permission from Heartland Plays, Inc. Any attempt to use this or any other work without first obtaining permission is a violation of copyright and punishable by law.
5. DO NOT rob this Author or any of the Authors we represent of their right to be paid for the use of their property. It is a crime and it is wrong!

Product Code YA013-FC

Please, Not that Shoe Again!

—A Cinderella Story

by

Talya Daie
with Lili Daie

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

REPRODUCTION WITHOUT SPECIFIC WRITTEN PERMISSION PROHIBITED

**Performance Rights Available Exclusively through
Heartland Plays, Inc. at heartlandplays.com
playsnow@heartlandplays.com
customer service: 406-431-7680**

**Copyright © 2005 by Talya Daie
Certificate of Registrations, U.S. Copyright Office
Pau 2-707-119**

Please, Not that Shoe Again!

by Talya Daie with Lili Daie

THE CHARACTERS

CINDY (CINDERELLA): 20, very pretty or would be in proper clothes

PRINCE AL (ALBERT): 25; marriage is the last thing he cares about.

LADY GEORGINA: 40's; Cindy's godmother; handsome, snobbish and ambitious.

BINKY, COUNT OF SOLSBERY: Lady Georgina's soon-to-be husband.

COUNT HOOPER: Al's personal assistant.

THE STEPMOTHER: What you might expect in a Cinderella story.

ANABELLA: Cindy's stepsister.

ARABELLA: Cindy's other stepsister.

THE KING: Prince Al's father.

THE QUEEN: Prince Al's mother; intent on finding a suitable wife for her son.

PETER: Lady Georgina's coachman.

LADIES INTENT ON MARRYING THE PRINCE:

MADLEN
ESMERALDA
AMELIA
MARGARET

LADY AGATHA

GIRL IN THE GREEN DRESS

THE FIRST SERVANT

THE SECOND SERVANT

THE SETTING

Cinderella's house, the palace and various places in the kingdom

TIME

Early 20th century

Please, Not that Shoe Again!

by Talya Daie & Lili Daie

ACT I: Scene 1

SETTING: *Outside LADY GEORGINA's house.*

AT RISE: *PETER, the coachman, a man of uncertain age with a gloomy face, enters carrying two big and seemingly heavy suitcases. LADY GEORGINA awaits just offstage set for traveling.*

LADY GEORGINA (OFF)

Mary! Mary!!

LADY GEORGINA appears. She is in her 40s, but still very handsome. She is wearing an elegant travel dress, carrying a handbag, a scarf and gloves.

LADY GEORGINA

Where is that stupid maid of mine?! I have a ball to attend!

BINKY, about fifty, almost bald, and carelessly dressed, joins her. She puts on her gloves, dropping the handbag. BINKY hastens to pick it up.

LADY GEORGINA

Binky, do something! Find that awful Mary and tell her to get in here!

BINKY

She's at home, dear, tending her sick mother. Remember? You gave her leave to go.

LADY GEORGINA

Her mother! Oh! Who ever saw such god-awful timing!

BINKY

But, darling, why the rush?! Just because of some goddaughter that no one ever heard about...

LADY GEORGINA

Now, Binky, I have my reasons! Just tell Peter to get the carriage ready! *(Speaks more kindly)* And don't you worry your silly bald head about it. I am going to fix everything.

But, dearest...
BINKY

LADY GEORGINA disappears behind the curtain. BINKY stands confused, holding her handbag.

...fix what?!...

BLACKOUT.

ACT I: Scene 2

SETTING: *Late afternoon. The deck of a small ship that brings PRINCE AL back home.*

AT RISE: *AL, with clever and handsome face, wearing a travel dress of the period, stands on the deck, staring gloomily ahead.*

Hooper!
(Loudly) AL

Count HOOPER hurries in. He is about twenty two, somewhat baby-faced, very cute. He too is wearing a travel dress.

Yes, Your Highness!
HOOPER

Ah, there you are! Look, go and find the captain! Tell him to turn back!
AL

What?!
HOOPER

We are going back to Africa.
AL

But, Sir!
HOOPER

No “buts”, Hooper. I am the prince!
AL

HOOPER

B... b... Your parents, Sir!

AL

What about them?

HOOPER

The ball!!

AL

Oh, yes, the ball! Dozens of girls with nothing but my poor self for a target! The captain, Hooper! Get the captain!

HOOPER

(Sternly)

You promised your parents to attend the ball, Your Highness!

AL

(Sighs wearily)

So stupid of me, I must say. Not at all my usual self! Why did I do that, Hooper?

HOOPER

(Cautiously)

I believe your mother had something to do with it, Your Highness. I mean, her threatening to kill herself...

AL

Possibly, yes. And stop “Your Highness’ing me, Hooper! All right, I give up. I’ll be there. Noblesse oblige!

HOOPER

Very well, Sir!

AL turns to him, defiantly.

AL

But I’m not marrying anyone!

HOOPER

(Soothingly)

Fine with me, Sir!

AL

They cannot force me into making a choice... but then, all those girls... Surely one will manage to entrap me... Hooper, what shall I do? There are so many things for me, in so many other places. I haven’t even begun exploring Africa...

HOOPER

Well then... Tell them ... that they are... that you feel...

AL

(Sardonically)

Thank you, Hooper. The best piece of advice a man ever had.

HOOPER looks embarrassed.

BLACKOUT.

ACT I: Scene 3

SETTING: *The kitchen in CINDY's House. The usual attributes of kitchen: fireplace, table, two chairs, some pots and plates. Two unusual features are the narrow bed in the corner and broken mirror on the wall.*

AT RISE: *CINDY, wearing an old shabby dress, chops vegetables using antique dagger instead of a kitchen knife. She is very beautiful, slightly cute, with some kind of special charm about her. She is not really aware of it or of her beauty.*

THE STEPMOTHER walks in. She is in her 50s, with a sour unpleasant face. She is holding a broken broomstick.

THE STEPMOTHER

Cinderella! What on earth happened to the broomstick?!

CINDY hides quickly the dagger behind her back.

CINDY

Um...

THE STEPMOTHER

Don't answer me! This is the second one this year! What do you do with them, girl, beat the dust to death?!

CINDY

(Embarrassed)

I ... there was a mouse! And I tried to fight it off. And I think I hit it with my dagger. The broomstick, I mean, not the mouse.

THE STEPMOTHER

Your dagger!

CINDY

(Proudly)

Yes - the one that belonged to my great-grandfather Edward! On my mother's side!

THE STEPMOTHER

The next thing you break, I will...

CINDY

Will what? It is not like you could pay me less!

THE STEPMOTHER

You are fed! You are dressed! You have a roof above your head!

CINDY

I cook the food! The roof in the kitchen leaks for years now, and as for clothes... *(Looks down at her shabby dress)*... the less said about them, the better!

STEPMOTHER

You spoiled insolent brat! You will stay in this kitchen until you learn to be grateful! And fix this broomstick!

THE STEPMOTHER walks out angrily.

CINDY

Grateful! Over my dead body!

BLACKOUT.

ACT I: Scene 4

SETTING:

The drawing room in CINDY's house. There is a sofa and one or two armchairs. The furniture looks shabby and tasteless. Four candles are burning on the fireplace.

AT RISE:

ANABELLA, aged 25, works on some kind of embroidery. She is almost ugly, not stupid, but this only makes her bitter and frustrated. ARABELLA, aged 22, is somewhat too plump but better looking than her sister. She lies on the sofa, her embroidery on the floor.

THE STEPMOTHER walks in. ARABELLA jumps up and picks her embroidery. THE STEPMOTHER goes to the sofa, extinguishing on her way two out of the four candles. ANABELLA makes a face and moves nearer to the remaining candles.

THE STEPMOTHER

Four candles! It's time you found yourselves rich husbands.

ANABELLA

You found yourself one! And where did it get you?

THE STEPMOTHER

(Bitterly)

Well, it's not my fault that he lost his money.

ARABELLA

But we have the manor.

THE STEPMOTHER

Yes, child, without the money to keep it. (Puts her wrist dramatically on her brow) I can feel migraine coming on. Close the curtains! And put out one of these candles! (Pause) Arabella, go and see if dinner is ready!

ARABELLA

(Yawns)

Let Anabella go! I am tired!

ANABELLA

(Angrily)

You are always tired! And I have to do everything!

THE STEPMOTHER

Enough, both of you! Can't I have some peace and quiet in my own house?

The front door bell rings. ARABELLA comes to life at once. Even ANABELLA looks more animated.

ARABELLA

Who can it be at this hour? May I go and see, mother?

She rushes out without waiting for an answer.

THE STEPMOTHER

(Calls after her)

Remember, I am not at home to anybody!

ANABELLA

Especially if it's about bills!

THE STEPMOTHER glares at her, but ANABELLA is already on her way out. THE STEPMOTHER disappears quickly through another door.

BLACKOUT.

ACT I: Scene 5

SETTING: *A front hall in CINDY's house.*

AT RISE: *The poorly lit hall is empty. The doorbell keeps ringing.*

CINDY dressed as before hurries in. ARABELLA and ANABELLA appear after her. CINDY opens the front door. LADY GEORGINA is standing there.

CINDY

Good evening, Madam! What can I do for you?

LADY GEORGINA

Not much probably, but we shall see. Move along, girl! Don't stand in my way!

CINDY, astonished, lets her pass. THE STEPSISTERS gape at LADY GEORGINA.

ARABELLA

Who are you?

LADY GEORGINA

(To ARABELLA)

And who are you? Are you Anabella?

ARABELLA

No, Madam, I am Arabella.

LADY GEORGINA

Then this is Anabella?

ANABELLA

I don't think this is any of your business, whoever you are.

LADY GEORGINA

I am not so sure about that. But I am glad than neither of you is Cinderella. *(THE STEPSISTERS look smug for a moment.)* I wouldn't like having either of you for a goddaughter.

CINDY

A goddaughter! ...

ANABELLA

(To LADY GEORGINA)

How dare you!

ARABELLA pushes her sister with her elbow.

ARABELLA

Anabella, shut up! I know who she is. This is Lady Georgina.

ANABELLA

That one?!

LADY GEORGINA

(Looks critically around)

Awful! Positively awful! Used to be quite a decent house, too!

ARABELLA

(Whispers loudly to ANABELLA)

Her reputation may be ruined, but she is loaded with money. We must obey her and grovel, mother says. And then she might put us into her will.

ANABELLA

I don't care about her will!

LADY GEORGINA

Really?!

*ANABELLA looks embarrassed and angry.
CINDY steps forth, speaking quietly and respectfully.*

CINDY

I heard a lot of you from my father, Lady Georgina.

LADY GEORGINA

(Ironically)

Indeed. And how much of it was to my credit?

CINDY is taken aback but finds refuge in good manners.

CINDY

Please come in and make yourself comfortable.

She shows LADY GEORGINA into the drawing-room and goes after her. The sisters exchange a look and follow.

BLACKOUT.

ACT I: Scene 6

SETTING: *The drawing room in CINDY's house.*

AT RISE: *The room is empty. LADY GEORGINA comes in followed by CINDY and the stepsisters. She surveys the room critically and then sits gingerly on a chair after checking its cleanness. ANABELLA tries now to show some respect to their guest.*

ANABELLA

(To LADY GEORGINA)

I am afraid my mother can't see you now. She is suffering from one of her migraines.

LADY GEORGINA

Very convenient! I have had a tiring day as it is. *(To CINDY)* Come here, child! Let me take a good look at you.

CINDY obeys her quietly. LADY GEORGINA looks at her closely.

LADY GEORGINA (CONT'D)

Could be worse, I am sure.

LADY GEORGINA touches a stain of ash on CINDY's cheek, and removes a twig from her hair. CINDY again clings to her good manners.

CINDY

You are very kind, Madam. I wish my father was here... *(Her voice quivers slightly)*... to receive you properly.

LADY GEORGINA

My dear, your father could do nothing properly! Look at his second marriage!

ARABELLA giggles. ANABELLA looks furious, but doesn't dare to speak.

CINDY

(Offended)

Lady Georgina, you are talking about my father!

LADY GEORGINA

Not a very fascinating subject, I am afraid. Never was. I would rather talk about the Ball.

ARABELLA gapes at her with an open mouth. ANABELLA moves closer to LADY GEORGINA in order to hear better.

ANABELLA

What ball?

LADY GEORGINA

The Royal Ball, of course! At the end of which Prince Al will choose his bride. You mean you heard nothing?

ANABELLA
No!

ARABELLA
No!

LADY GEORGINA

It is the only reason the Prince is coming back from Africa. *(The STEPSISTERS move even closer to her.)* According to the tradition, everyone has a chance... Still... *(Looks critically at the STEPSISTERS)*... I really do not think...

ARABELLA bursts in tears.

They did not invite us!
ARABELLA

The bastards!
ANABELLA

CINDY goes to the fireplace and picks a big golden envelope placed on it.

This must be it.
CINDY

She gives the envelope to ARABELLA who tears it impatiently.

The invitation!
ARABELLA

ANABELLA snatches the invitation from ARABELLA who tries to snatch it back.

Stop this foolishness at once!
LADY GEORGINA

She puts forth her hand. ANABELLA gives her the envelope reluctantly.

Cindy, you witch, you tried to keep it from us! You didn't want us to go!
ARABELLA

A very sound judgment on her side!
LADY GEORGINA

She reads the invitation.

CINDY
(*To ARABELLA*)
You know I am not supposed to open the mail. (*Mimics THE STEPMOTHER's voice*)
... "since it is not for such as myself".

LADY GEORGINA
Oh, but it is! (*Reads aloud*) "The Honorable Misses Anabella, Arabella and Cinderella!"
Excellent! Cinderella, you are going to the ball!

ARABELLA
She is not!

ANABELLA
She is not!

I am not going!
CINDY

LADY GEORGINA

This amity is quite touching. And may I ask, why not?

ARABELLA

She is dirty!

ANABELLA

She is wearing rags!

LADY GEORGINA

This can be taken care of. I wish I could say the same about you two, my dears.

ARABELLA

She is our stepsister!

LADY GEORGINA

And isn't it punishment enough?

ANABELLA

Oh!

CINDY

(To LADY GEORGINA)

I told you I am not going. I do not care for balls. Even if I had proper clothes ...

LADY GEORGINA

Well, there is still time. For now, Cinderella, you may show me to my room.

ANABELLA

My mother will hear of it!

LADY GEORGINA

(To ANABELLA)

I do hope she will. Tell your mother I will see her tomorrow – but not too early, mind you!

(To ARABELLA) I will have supper in my room. Be kind enough to arrange it!

ARABELLA

(Obediently)

Yes, Madam! Only I don't know how.....

ANABELLA

(To ARABELLA)

“Yes, Madam!” Disgusting!

LADY GEORGINA

Ah, and Peter! My coachman! *(To ANABELLA)* Find the tiresome creature and show him the way. You might give him hand with the luggage.

ANABELLA

(Indignant)

Me?!

LADY GEORGINA

I'm sure you can handle it, dear. I am a light packer. There's a good girl.

ANABELLA walks out, furious. ARABELLA gapes at LADY GEORGINA, speechless, and then hurries after her sister.

LADY GEORGINA

(To CINDY)

You may take me up now.

CINDY

Yes, but ... Lady Georgina, why are you here after all these years?

LADY GEORGINA

My dear, the idea of meeting your stepmother...

CINDY

(Bitterly)

I can understand that. Only it would be nice if someone came... But why now?

LADY GEORGINA

(Hesitates)

I felt it was my duty. And of course there was the ball.

CINDY

You know, whatever the reason, I am glad to see you.

LADY GEORGINA

Thank you, my dear. Actually, you are quite a nice surprise. Of course, I hardly remembered you. But the best part of having a bad memory is that you always get to meet new people.

CINDY giggles and turns to go. LADY GEORGINA gives her a long look and follows her.

BLACKOUT.

ACT I: Scene 7

SETTING: *The kitchen in CINDY's house.*

AT RISE: *There is a pile of luggage on the floor. PETER is sitting on a suitcase, drinking straight of huge bottle. CINDY comes in.*

CINDY

You must be Peter.

PETER turns over the bottle; it is empty.

PETER

(Gloomily)

Indeed, Miss.

CINDY

Can I help you?

PETER

(Looks at her, speaks with gloomy contempt)

You? No, Miss.

He puts the bottle into his pocket, picks up an enormous amount of luggage and goes out.

CINDY

(Calls courteously after him)

Good night, then!

There is no answer. The lights go out. CINDY screams in the darkness. There are sounds of struggle. The lights come up. CINDY stands on a chair, holding a dagger and looking frightened out of her wits.

CINDY

Get out before I kill you, you monster!

ARABELLA looks in.

ARABELLA

Goodness, Cindy, what happened?

CINDY

A mouse! Under the sink! Please, please get it out of here!

ARABELLA

Me?! Are you out of your mind?

She disappears swiftly.

CINDY

Arabella, don't leave me alone with it! Arabella!

BLACKOUT.

ACT I: Scene 8

SETTING: *The kitchen in CINDY's house.*

ON RISE: *The kitchen looks like a battlefield – overturned chairs, some pots thrown on the floor. CINDY is sitting on the table hugging her knees. She looks weary and dejected.*

LADY GEORGINA comes in, wearing an elegant dressing gown. She yawns, looks around, notices CINDY and seems somewhat surprised.

LADY GEORGINA

Good morning, my dear.

CINDY

Oh ...Good morning.

LADY GEORGINA

I trust you slept well.

CINDY

N-not really!

LADY GEORGINA

Try a bed next time! *(Walks to the table, picks up a chair and sits down)* Well, I do want some tea. Don't you have a parlor-maid here?

CINDY

We do. I am she.

LADY GEORGINA

A kitchen-maid, then?

CINDY

The same.

LADY GEORGINA

Very economical, I am sure.

CINDY

I did mean to bring up your morning tea... only...

CINDY gets off the table and starts making tea.

LADY GEORGINA

So this is where you spend most of your time.

CINDY

Not on the table, usually. It's just there was a mouse somewhere... (*CINDY puts the cup before LADY GEORGINA.*) I don't know why, but they scare me to death.

THE STEPMOTHER walks in. She doesn't see LADY GEORGINA seated by the table.

THE STEPMOTHER

Cindy, you idle hussy! Where is my breakfast? And yesterday's tea is still here! You were supposed to take it up to that Lady Georgina!

LADY GEORGINA looks horrified at her cup.

CINDY

(To LADY GEORGINA)

It's all right, I made fresh tea for you.

THE STEPMOTHER quickly recovers.

THE STEPMOTHER

Oh, Lady Georgina! Your arrival last night was such a nice surprise! My girls told me. But what are you doing in the kitchen? Allow me to take you to the drawing-room.

LADY GEORGINA

I am quite comfortable here, thank you. (*Sips her tea gingerly, muttering*) Yesterday's tea! Unbelievable....

THE STEPMOTHER

(Joins LADY GEORGINA at the table)

You cannot imagine the hardships and the economies I must adopt to keep ourselves.

LADY GEORGINA

Indeed, I cannot. Still, you could sell the house.

CINDY, who wanders around tidying the kitchen, freezes.

THE STEPMOTHER

The house left to me by my dear late husband! The memento of his devotion to me!

CINDY smiles in disdain.

LADY GEORGINA

I suppose his daughter is another such memento?

THE STEPMOTHER

The girl? Oh, she is hopeless, simply hopeless.

CINDY almost throws on the table the teacup intended for THE STEPMOTHER.

LADY GEORGINA

As a parlor-maid, you mean?

THE STEPMOTHER

Believe me, Lady Georgina, after all my dear girls and I did for her...

CINDY adds a plate angrily.

THE STEPMOTHER

(To CINDY)

Now look, you...

ANABELLA and ARABELLA burst into the kitchen.

ARABELLA

Mother! Cindy didn't wake us up on purpose!

ANABELLA

We won't have time to prepare for the ball!

THE STEPMOTHER

The what?!

ANABELLA
The Royal Ball!

ARABELLA
Everyone is invited!

ANABELLA

And the prince will choose ...

THE STEPMOTHER

His bride?! Oh, dear! Girls! Quick! Harry! (*To LADY GEORGINA*) Lady Georgina, a word from you... What do you think they should wear?

LADY GEORGINA

Anything they like. Believe me, it won't make any difference.

THE STEPMOTHER

Girls, did you hear? Lady Georgina says you will look lovely anyway. (*LADY GEORGINA winces.*) Come, my dears! Cinderella, leave the breakfast dishes! I need you in my dressing room! You will excuse us, Lady Georgina?

LADY GEORGINA

Willingly!

*THE STEPMOTHER and THE STEPSISERS
exit. CINDY lingers behind.*

LADY GEORGINA

Come back as soon as you can. We must choose a dress for you.

CINDY

Me?!

LADY GEORGINA

Yes, you, my dear!

CINDY

But ... why? What is there for me?

LADY GEORGINA

Oh, you hope to find your happiness in this kitchen.

CINDY

I am not staying here forever! The moment I am of age, I will be off. Meanwhile I try to save some money.

LADY GEORGINA

Very successfully, I am sure.

CINDY

Well, not really. But I don't care. Look, there is a whole world out there! And I am going to see it all! (*Speaks confidentially*) I have men's clothes, you know, to disguise myself if need be.

LADY GEORGINA

How original! And pray, where did you get them?

CINDY

From our groom. He wasn't paid for a fortnight, so he left. And he said that I could have his things; because he won't find work in those rags anyway.

LADY GEORGINA

(Sardonically)

And surely you will fare better?

CINDY

I know I will. You see, I have a dagger and a sword and I practice fencing whenever I can. Oh, Lady Georgina, just think of the adventures waiting for me!

LADY GEORGINA

Really, I would rather not. But don't you think a Royal Ball could be quite an adventure?

CINDY

It's just a ball. How adventurous could it be?

LADY GEORGINA

Very much so! *(Comes close to CINDY and turns her to the mirror on the wall)* Girl, every man there will try to get introduced to you. You will be the prettiest of them all.

\

CINDY

(Stares at herself)

Do you really think so?

LADY GEORGINA

Believe me. I have spent enough years at court. And, my dear, I know Prince Al. He is handsome, witty, kind – in his own way.

CINDY

(Surprised)

What has he got to do with it?

LADY GEORGINA

Well, the adventures usually include a prince.

The shrill voices of the STEPSISTERS and THE STEPMOTHER are heard.

ARABELLA (OFF)

Cindy!

THE STEPMOTHER (OFF)

Cinderella! Come here at once, you lazy girl!

LADY GEORGINA

Go! Get rid of them as soon as you can. And then come to my room!

CINDY hurries out. LADY GEORGINA sighs.

LADY GEORGINA

Really, those modern girls...So tiresome!

BLACKOUT.

ACT I: Scene 9

SETTING: *Later that day.*

AT RISE: *The stage is empty. Offstage, ARABELLA and ANABELLA prepare for the ball. CINDY attempts to help while THE STEPMOTHER shouts orders.*

ARABELLA (OFF)

I won't wear the green dress! It makes me look like a toad!

ANABELLA (OFF)

Well, it can't help it, Arabella. You do look the part!

ARABELLA (OFF)

Mother!!

THE STEPMOTHER (OFF)

Quiet! I cannot think with all this noise. Cinderella, where have you been? Never mind, help me with those feathers. And clean this mess up!

ANABELLA (OFF)

Cindy, can't you do something about my hair?

CINDY (OFF)

(Gently)

No, Anabella. I did all I could.

ANABELLA (OFF)

I don't care! Do it again!

CINDY enters carrying clothes etc. THE STEPMOTHER appears behind her.

THE STEPMOTHER

Cinderella, bring the black velvet! Now! For goodness sake, girl, hurry! The prince is waiting! (*Dreamily*) By tomorrow you may be stepsister to a Princess... (*In sudden alarm*) I trust you will never mention any such relationship between yourself and my Royal daughter.

CINDY

(*Scornfully*)

I can safely promise you that!

They disappear in different directions.

BLACKOUT.

ACT I: Scene 10

SETTING: *LADY GEORGINA's room. There is a bed, a big mirror, an armchair, an open suitcase full of clothes on the floor. A screen conceals part of the room.*

AT RISE: *LADY GEORGINA in a dressing gown is rummaging in the suitcase.*

THE STEPMOTHER (OFF)

Lady Georgina, may I come in?

LADY GEORGINA throws herself into an armchair, her hand on her brow, a picture of suffering. THE STEPMOTHER comes in, looking thin and depressing in black velvet.

THE STEPMOTHER

What! Not ready yet?!

LADY GEORGINA

(*Feebly*)

Oh, it doesn't matter. I have such a horrible headache I can hardly stand.

THE STEPMOTHER tries unsuccessfully to hide her satisfaction.

THE STEPMOTHER

You mean you won't be joining us after all?

LADY GEORGINA

Out of the question! So unfortunate!

THE STEPMOTHER

Oh, I am sorry! But I do hope to bring back some good news.

LADY GEORGINA

What news?

THE STEPMOTHER

Well, the Prince is choosing his bride, after all. And as I have two daughters... is it too much to expect?

LADY GEORGINA

(Forgets she is ill)

Yes, it is! *(Sees THE STEPMOTHER'S face; regains composure)* Well...they do say love is blind.

THE STEPMOTHER

(Offended)

I am afraid we must hurry, Lady Georgina! Good evening to you!

THE STEPMOTHER walks out tight-lipped, her head high. LADY GEORGINA listens for a moment. There is a sound of a front door, opened then closed.

LADY GEORGINA

Cinderella!

CINDY

(Entering)

You know, I feel sorry for them. The harder they tried, the worse they looked. But, Lady Georgina, you are not ready!

LADY GEORGINA

Yes, because I am not going.

CINDY

You are not?! But why?! Don't you like balls?

LADY GEORGINA

Not really, my dear. And since you will enjoy this ball immensely, and I will not, obviously you are the better choice

CINDY

(In panic)

But I can't go alone!

LADY GEORGINA

You can, and you will! Come, we don't have time for that. Now, let me see... *(Picks up some dresses)* The red velour... No, too cheap. I think we need something very simple, a little rustic even... This white sateen might do. Horribly banal, of course, but can't be helped. The boy is foolish enough to have simple tastes.

CINDY

What do you mean?

LADY GEORGINA

Never mind, child. Here, try this!

CINDY looks doubtfully at the white dress, and then takes it and disappears behind the screen. LADY GEORGINA goes on rummaging in her trunk.

LADY GEORGINA (CONT'D)

Now, for some trinkets! The diamond necklace might do. Presented to me by Countess Shiller-Hagen! Silly cow! Thought it would keep me away from her remarkably handsome ... never mind now... Oh, the pearls! Definitely, the pearls! Solsbery gave them to me, you know.

CINDY appears in the white dress which suits her perfectly. She is barefoot. LADY GEORGINA, with a string of pearls in her hand, looks impressed.

LADY GEORGINA (CONT'D)

Better than I thought. Quite perfect, actually! Now, put on those pearls!

CINDY

But... they must cost a fortune! I can't take them, not even for one night!

LADY GEORGINA

Don't worry, dear. It's a fake.

CINDY

(Disappointed)

Oh...

LADY GEORGINA

The dear boy was in somewhat straightened circumstances. As usual! But you shouldn't worry. As fakes go, it's quite a masterpiece.

CINDY

Thank you, I will take it, then.

LADY GEORGINA

Now, the carriage! (*Shouts*) Peter! Come here at once! Annoying creature! Never around when I need him! (*Turns back to CINDY*) And your hair, of course! Sit down! Hopefully, I still remember some of these things I tried so hard to forget...like the hairdressing.

CINDY

You know about hairdressing?!

LADY GEORGINA

My dear, not everybody is born a lady. Some acquire it – together with a husband or two. Now sit still!

She works deftly on CINDY's hair, making her look quite different – more sophisticated, but no less beautiful. At some point CINDY catches her reflection in the mirror and stares, stunned.

CINDY

Is that me?!

LADY GEORGINA

I am proud to say your own mother would not recognize you.

PETER enters and stays respectfully at the door.

PETER

Did you call, Madam?

LADY GEORGINA

Ah, Peter. At last! Look, I am ill.

PETER

Very well, Madam ... I mean...

LADY GEORGINA

Never mind what you mean. And I am not going to the ball. You will take the young lady instead.

PETER

Very well, Madam! Which young lady?

LADY GEORGINA

This one! You will take her to the palace, and bring her back... shall we say, at midnight? And remember, you will not talk to anyone, or disclose where she came from, or, God forbid, mention my name.

PETER

(Offended)

Very well, Madam! As if I ever talked to anybody except my horses.

LADY GEORGINA

That's the spirit! And bring the carriage at once!

PETER turns to go. His face shows clearly that he would much rather stay at home.

LADY GEORGINA

(To CINDY)

Perfect, I think. Off you go, now!

CINDY

But ...um...shoes?

LADY GEORGINA

Oh, the shoes! How tiresome! *(Searches in her trunk; pulls out a pair)* Try these!

CINDY

(Puts them on)

Too big!

LADY GEORGINA

How about those?

CINDY tries the other pair.

CINDY

Still too big!

LADY GEORGINA pulls out of the suitcase a pair of small white shoes.

LADY GEORGINA

The last pair! I do hope they fit. Otherwise you will have to go barefoot. Probably will create a fashion, too!

CINDY

(Giggles)

I hope not. *(Tries the shoes and sounds doubtful)* The right one is fine. But the left one is too big. How can it be?

LADY GEORGINA

Different pairs, probably. I must speak to Mary about it. Still, this is all we got. Just try not to lose the left one.

CINDY makes a few careful steps, spins around.

CINDY

They are beautiful, and I do love them. How can I ever repay you!

LADY GEORGINA

Quite simply, my dear! Go to this ball and have the time of your life!

CINDY

(Thankfully)

Oh, I will! *(Runs to LADY GEORGINA; kisses her)* Thank you for being so kind to me!

For the first time LADY GEORGINA looks embarrassed.

LADY GEORGINA

Hurry now, it's late as it is!

CINDY runs out, but loses her left shoe and has to go back for it. LADY GEORGINA sighs. She looks tired and a little depressed.

BLACKOUT.

ACT II: Scene 1

SETTING: *The ballroom in the Royal Palace. It looks ready for the ball. In one corner there is a side table with an assortment of bottles of wine, etc.*

AT RISE: *The music plays in the background. THE KING, about sixty, with kind face lacking character, stands near the side table, looking worried. AL, standing near, tries to overcome his temper without much success. THE QUEEN, already dressed for the ball, is seen at the farthest end of the ballroom. A maid is hovering over her, trying to finish some last moment alterations in her dress. Meanwhile, she is giving frantic directions to the servants. Some of the directions are heard quite clearly.*

THE KING

Well, Albert, what do you think?

AL

I never think if I can possibly avoid it.

THE KING

(Not listening)

It seems that everything is ready.

THE QUEEN shrieks something unintelligible in the background. A SERVANT startled by it drops a tray noisily.

THE KING

Well, almost. I wonder who will be the bride...

AL

Look, father, all this nonsense about choosing a bride...

THE KING

(Anxiously)

Yes, dear, what about it? *(Moves to the side table laden with bottles, looks around, makes sure THE QUEEN is busy; pours himself a drink)* Will you join me?

AL

No. Father, I must talk to you...

THE KING

But of course! Go ahead. *(Another loud shriek from THE QUEEN)* You were saying...

AL

Look, I cut short my trip because I promised to be present. And I like to keep my promises. But that's all!

THE KING

(Embarrassed)

Yes, yes, I remember.

He looks at his half empty glass and rummages in his pocket. THE QUEEN is heard speaking loudly and clearly to MASON, pronouncing his name with an exaggerated French accent.

THE QUEEN

No, Mason, I won't have it. Do it now!!!

THE KING

Ah! Here is the list.

AL

What list?!

THE KING

Your mother's mostly, but that can't be helped. (*Hands AL a crumpled piece of paper*) Still, they are all of them beauties, or so they think...

In the background THE SERVANTS move things noisily. THE QUEEN's gestures become more frantic.

AL

Wait a minute! Wasn't I supposed to look for my bride among all the young women of the kingdom?

THE KING

Officially yes. But you didn't really think your mother would have you marry someone off the street, did you?

AL

And what about the tradition and equal opportunity for everyone?!

THE KING

Come, surely you have outgrown those stories! Now look, Albert, it took your mother and me a month to put this list together. Ten girls must be enough, even for you!

AL

Oh, more than enough!

THE KING

So your mother insists... I mean, we insist ... and after all, what does it matter? You must marry someone. And you can always contrive to see as little of her as possible.

THE QUEEN

James! I need you at once!

THE KING

(Grimacing)

Well, not always. (*To THE QUEEN*) Coming, dear! (*Tries to keep a steady hand; while pours another drink, fails, AL helps him silently.*) Will you? No, I suppose not.

THE QUEEN approaches. She is very snobbish, elegantly dressed, not handsome. It's also clear AL dislikes her. She looks at THE KING critically.

THE QUEEN

Goodness, James, you are not ready yet!

THE KING

But I am!

THE QUEEN

If this is your attire for your son's ball... really, you do your utmost to irritate me. Just when I'm going to meet my future daughter in-law!

THE KING

But you met them all! Wasn't it you who made the list? The only one I added was that pretty little Countess Vera.

THE QUEEN

Yes, and she is not suitable in any respect.

AL listens silently, his face expressionless. THE KING speaks very firmly, clearly trying for some independence.

THE KING

Well, I put her on the list, and there she stays.

THE QUEEN

It is not important. Albert knows better.

AL lifts an eyebrow.

THE KING

Poor Albert!

THE QUEEN

Why 'poor Albert'? The boy is getting married at last.

THE KING

Exactly.

THE QUEEN glares at him and then turns to AL.

THE QUEEN

You will try not to exceed the list, won't you, dear?

AL

(Bows coldly)

Your servant, Madam!

THE QUEEN looks at him doubtfully, and turns to safer ground – her husband – who meanwhile is pouring himself another glass.

THE KING

(To THE QUEEN)

Now, my dear, one tiny glass of this heavenly elixir, and I will do everything you wish.

AL

As usual!

THE QUEEN

(To AL)

Are you trying to annoy me just when the guests are about to arrive?

THE KING

(Quite drunk now and very happy about it)

Safety considerations, my dear!

AL tries to hide a smile.

THE QUEEN

You are impossible! Both of you! *(Turns away)* Mason! Leave this flower pot exactly where it is! And do send some flowers to the balcony. Don't just stand there! You see that nothing is the way it should be. No, come here immediately! I will show you what I mean.

She hurries away. AL examines the list.

AL

Countess Esmeralda. Lady Margaret. Worse than I thought! Vera... Oh, yes, here she is. Oh, Father, how could you...

THE KING

Well, you know how it is...

AL

And Madlen! And Amelia! God, I am lost!

AL, in despair, grasps THE KING's shoulders, causing him spill half of his drink.

AL (CONT'D)

Father, there must be some way out!

THE KING

(Looks mournfully at his glass)

Yes, yes. Now where are all the servants?

He looks at THE QUEEN, who wanders like a hurricane in the room, frantically gesturing, while the servants follow anxiously.

THE KING (CONT'D)

Oh, they are playing with your mother. How nice. Did you say something, Albert?

AL

No, Father.

THE KING

Well, see you later, then. It seems I must change ... or something...

He tries to get a hold on the bottle. AL takes it gently from him and puts it back on the table. THE KING walks away unsteadily with an empty glass. The MUSIC STARTS TO PLAY. THE KING makes a few wavering dancing movements. Al watches him grimly.

BLACKOUT.

ACT II: Scene 2

SETTING: *In front of the Royal Palace, and then the Ballroom.*

AT RISE: *Light falls on CINDY.*

CINDY

(Looking back)

Peter, better wait for me here at midnight! It seems an easy spot to find.

PETER (OFF)

Yes, Miss.

CINDY

But what will you do with yourself all this time?

PETER (OFF)

(Gloomily)

Don't you worry about that, Miss!

CINDY

All right, I won't. Have fun!

There is no answer. CINDY hesitates.

CINDY (CONT'D)

It is now or never! Now!

She takes a step forward. The lights go up. The ballroom is full of guests. The MUSIC IS PLAYING. The QUEEN moves majestically through the crowd, smiles kindly to some. AL is seen dancing with LADY AGATHA. THE MUSIC STOPS SUDDENLY. AL and his partner find themselves near HOOPER.

AL

Hooper, I bestow on you the great honor of dancing with... with...

LADY AGATHA

Lady Agatha.

AL

Of course, Lady Agatha!

He leaves her with HOOPER and strides away. HOOPER looks desperately for something to say.

HOOPER

Are you enjoying yourself, Lady Agatha?

LADY AGATHA

(Curtly)

No.

She walks away. HOOPER looks disappointed. A GIRL approaches him. She is wearing an ugly green dress.

THE GIRL IN THE GREEN DRESS

Count Hooper! Are you very close to His Highness? *(Comes close; speaks confidentially)*
They say he listens to your every word...

HOOPER

Always, Madam! Let me see if I can find him for you.

He moves away quickly. CINDY appears at the entrance to the ballroom. She looks excited and frightened at the same time. From the other side of the room HOOPER gazes at CINDY. Near him, AL listens with a bored expression to THE GIRL IN THE GREEN DRESS.

THE GIRL IN THE GREEN DRESS

(To AL)

Such lovely music! I enjoy every moment!

AL

Too crowded, though, don't you think?

HOOPER speaks to AL, without taking his eyes from CINDY.

HOOPER

I think we have one more, your Highness.

AL

Pity! Still, do something about it, will you, Hooper?

HOOPER

Yes, Your Highness! Shall I marry her?

AL

What?!

He turns to HOOPER. At this moment MARGARET appears behind AL and puts her hands on his eyes.

MARGARET

Guess who?

THE GIRL IN THE GREEN DRESS moves away disappointed.

AL

(Teasing)

Countess Vera?

MARGARET laughs angrily.

MARGARET

No, you foolish boy! It's always Countess Vera with you.

AL

Margaret! Of course! How could I forget your little games!

MARGARET looks doubtful whether it is supposed to be a compliment.

AL

(Almost whispers to her)

We must talk. But not now! Later!

MARGARET

(With a meaningful glance)

I will be waiting.

She walks away, turns and smilingly sends a kiss to AL. ARABELLA and ANABELLA appear in the ballroom. CINDY notices them, steps aside and vanishes from sight.

AL

(To HOOPER)

That was Lady Margaret, Hooper. Number four on my list.

HOOPER still stares towards the entrance to the ballroom.

HOOPER

She is gone!

AL

She will be back soon enough. They all will!

He turns around and finds that HOOPER still stares towards the entrance and clearly does not mean MARGARET.

AL (CONT'D)

(Impatiently)

Well, you can marry her, whoever she is... and all the rest of them too! Now, if you'll excuse me, I must go and find Madlen.

ARABELLA and ANABELLA pass by, trying hard to get AL's attention. He looks irritated, but then smiles cunningly.

AL

(To HOOPER)

Why don't you start with those two?

He shoves HOOPER in the STEPSISTER's direction. HOOPER looks horrified. AL walks away. Behind him HOOPER is seen trying to deal with THE STEPSISTERS who smile, curtsey, hit him not so gently with their fans and try to be ladylike in general.

BLACKOUT.

ACT II: Scene 3

SETTING:

A small room in the Palace used as a pantry. There is a sofa and a table filled with leftovers. Also on the table is a tray with glasses and bottles, one of which is green in color.

AT RISE:

PETER enters.

PETER

Ah! That's more like it.

He picks up a bottle, sits down and drinks, contentedly. THE KING comes in with an empty glass in his hand, muttering to himself. He halts and almost falls down.

THE KING

Good. Good. Mind if I stay a bit?

PETER

Please yourself, Sir.

THE KING joins PETER on the sofa. PETER gives THE KING a knowing look and pours him a drink.

THE KING

We don't have to talk, you know. A little peace and quiet would be just fine. (*Empties his glass with a relish*) Now how about that green thing there?

PETER picks up the green bottle and pours in silence then hands the glass to THE KING who sips and looks appreciative.

THE KING (CONT'D)

Ah, that's real good stuff. (*Suspiciously*) How come they never give me things like that?

PETER

Don't know, Sir.

THE KING

Well, never mind, just pour some more! After all, it's all mine, you know. (*Looks at the empty bottles*) What's left of it, anyway! Must get some more for the wedding. Poor Albert, he doesn't stand a chance! Probably will be married by Sunday. Pity, eh? (*PETER nods.*) It's all wrong, you know. Marriage, I mean. You meet a charming girl, marry her, and a year later she turns into the worst kind of a dictator. At least, so I heard. I didn't get to go through all that, you see. My wife has always been a dictator. (*PETER nods in silent agreement.*) Women! All they want is legal right to give us merry hell until "death do us part".

PETER

Very true, Sir! More?

He fills THE KING's glass. THE KING puts it down slowly. His head falls down and he starts snoring. PETER shrugs, takes the glass left by THE KING and finishes the drink.

BLACKOUT.

ACT II: Scene 4

SETTING:

The Mirror Room in the Palace. There is a mirror, and a comfortable looking sofa. On a side table a vase with flowers. Heavy curtain conceals what is presumably a window.

AT RISE:

CINDY comes in. She looks around with pleasure, sees herself in the mirror. She comes nearer, examines herself with some wonder and then curtsies to herself.

CINDY

Countess Leony, at your service!

From outside music flows in. Cindy dances a little, trying to match her steps to the music but without much success. Voices are heard outside. CINDY looks around quickly and hides behind the curtain. AL and MADLEN come in. MADLEN is tall, handsome, and very emotional. She stops, turns to him.

MADLEN

You cannot imagine how I feel, seeing you after all those years...

AL

(Slightly embarrassed)

Yes, it's been a long time.

MADLEN

I thought you would never come back... But now you are here everything is so wonderful! Tell me that you missed me! Tell me that you thought about me!

CINDY pushes the curtain aside to see better.

AL

Madlen, silly girl, you are always on my mind! *(She smiles happily.)* How could I ever forget that afternoon, when you fell into rose bushes?

MADLEN looks embarrassed, but giggles dutifully. AL takes her hands and draws her near.

AL

Darling, let us make sure this happiness lasts. Will you marry me?

MADLEN

Oh, Albert! I waited years to hear you saying this!

AL kisses her slowly and expertly. CINDY tries hard not to miss anything.

AL

Well, you don't have to wait anymore. We will be married in two weeks. *(MADLEN looks ready to swoon.)* And in three weeks we will sail to Africa.

MADLEN

(Dreamily)

Yes, my love. *(Sobers up suddenly; draws back a little)* Africa? Why Africa?

AL

Didn't you know I spent the last year among Hulu tribes? Wonderful people! You would never believe they are cannibals.

MADLEN

Cannibals?!

MADLEN retreats to the sofa and sits down looking scared.

AL

Oh, yes, but nothing to worry about. As my wife you will be quite safe.

AL sits down by her side. She moves away. CINDY behind the curtain looks very interested.

AL (CONT'D)

They worship me, you know. They might even spare you eating human flesh. Usually they are quite adamant about it. Anyway, it is the best possible place for a honeymoon. So quiet! Not another European in sight. *(Tries to kiss her again; she recoils.)*

MADLEN

But ... you mean... you didn't actually...

AL

Don't be silly, darling! I wouldn't dream of asking you to live up to those fascinating customs of theirs. Anyway we will only stay there a few months. And then, of course, to the Forest of Death! *(MADLEN is very pale now.)* You know, I often wondered about the name, but none of the Hulu would even speak about it. Why, Madlen, darling, is something wrong?

MADLEN jumps up from the sofa. She is frantic.

MADLEN

I cannot marry you. I ... I am already engaged!

AL

Really?! What a lovely surprise!

MADLEN

Please, please let me go!

She tries to escape from the room, misses the way out and almost collides with CINDY who retreats quickly. MADLEN turns back and runs out.

AL
Madlen, my love! ... Gone!

He takes the brides' list out of his pocket and erases with relish one of the names.

AL (CONT'D)
And now Julia Von something! Who the hell is she, and where do I find her?

AL goes out quickly. CINDY comes out from behind the curtain. She giggles, then walks to the door and peeps out cautiously into a small hall before the Mirror Room. There she can see ARABELLA and ANABELLA sitting on a sofa right outside. CINDY retreats hastily.

BLACKOUT.

ACT II: Scene 5

SETTING: *The Ballroom in the Palace.*

AT RISE: *AL is dancing with a girl who is smiling at him coquettishly. HOOPER is cornered by THE STEPMOTHER, and is looking quite miserable.*

THE STEPMOTHER

... Two daughters, you know. Such a responsibility for a mother! And of course I can't presume to know whom His Highness will choose. (*Winks at HOOPER*) But if all this works out, you are most welcome to the other one!

HOOPER

I am honored, Madam. But you will have to excuse me. I think Her Majesty needs me. Could we continue our fascinating conversation later?

HOOPER escapes. The girl who has been dancing with AL leaves him suddenly, looking distressed. AL scans the crowd, looking very pleased with himself. Meanwhile two or three mothers in his immediate surrounding shove their daughters forward slightly. A girl smooths her hair, another straightens her gloves; they all smile at him.

AL starts to dance with another girl, talking to her earnestly. She pales and looks scared. They pass HOOPER who is dancing now with a pretty girl.

AL

(To HOOPER, confidentially)

Number seven, Hooper, number seven! I feel brave enough to tackle little Vera next!

HOOPER

Yes, Your Highness! *(To his partner)* What is he talking about?

HOOPER's PARTNER

He is so handsome! I wish you would introduce me.

HOOPER

(Groans)

Of course you do!

They go on dancing. AL's partner is seen leaving him suddenly and almost running out. AL shrugs smilingly and erases another name from the list.

BLACKOUT.

ACT II: Scene 6

SETTING: *The Mirror Room.*

AT RISE: *CINDY wanders around the room. Picks a flower out of the vase, puts it in her hair, goes to the mirror and makes a face at herself. She looks a little bored. AL's voice is heard outside.*

AL (OFF)

(Dramatically)

Amelia, dearest, at last we are alone!

CINDY

Oh, lovely! The show goes on!

CINDY runs to hide behind the curtain. AL comes in with AMELIA – somewhat heavy but with lovely hair.

AMELIA

Isn't it wonderful? I've been dreaming about you, you know. All kinds of dreams!

AL

(In his normal tone)

Really? What did you dream?

AMELIA

(Embarrassed)

No, I cannot tell you!

AL

First you awake my curiosity, and then you cannot tell me. You disappoint me, Amelia.

He remembers what he is about, and his voice becomes deeper, full of emotion.

AL (CONT'D)

But it does not matter, not at all. *(Takes both her hands)* Amelia, you know very well the purpose of this ball, and why we are here.

AMELIA lowers her eyes, playing the part.

AMELIA

Oh, Albert! I...I think I know.

AL

But what you don't know is this: the whole thing is a fake.

AMELIA

What?! You mean you will not choose a bride?!

AL

I chose her already, years ago. I chose you!

AMELIA falls into his arms. AL staggers but makes an effort and stays on his feet.

AMELIA

My dearest! My only love! But why didn't you tell me? It even seemed sometimes that you avoided me.

AL

I had to. I couldn't be sure my father will agree.

AMELIA

Your father!?! Since when does he matter?

AL

Did I say my father? Of course it was my mother I meant.

AMELIA

Oh, I understand... I thought she talked to Margaret a little too often!

AL

So I kept my silence. And how I suffered! (*Getting more and more excited*) ... Meeting you at balls and picnics, watching you talking to other men, laughing with them! I swore then, that one day you will be mine! And when it happens I will kill anyone who dares to speak to you.

AMELIA

Oh, my darling! Do you really love me so much?

AL

(*Taken aback; thinks fast*)

But that is not enough! If you dare to smile to anyone, I will kill you both.

AMELIA

Oh, Albert, you are so romantic!

AL

(*Quite nervous now*)

Actually ... I think there is only one way to make sure you will be mine and mine only. We will get married next week and leave right away to San-Lazar Island.

AMELIA

(*Sobers up*)

San-Lazar? But there is nothing and no one there! It's a desert!

AL

Precisely! No one to stop me from loving you ... to death! Do you love me, Amelia?

AMELIA

Forever! But... San-Lazar? (*Touches her hair doubtfully.*) Are there any hairdressers there?

AL

(*Threateningly*)

Another person!? Sharing in our love?!

AMELIA

(*Slightly frightened*)

Not a person... a ... hairdresser...

CINDY behind the curtain enjoys every moment.

AL

I will not have it! We must be alone, just the two of us!

AMELIA

(Nervously)

But ... the Queen...what will she say? You are the Crown Prince! We cannot leave the court!

AL

And who will stop me? *(He turns around wildly, theatrically.)* Who will dare to take you from me?! Is it another man?!

AMELIA

(Retreats a few steps)

No! Of course not!

AL

(Puts a final touch on his act)

We leave tomorrow! You will never see another hairdresser as long as you live! You will wear banana leaves until they rot!

AMELIA

You are mad!

AL

(Cheerfully)

Always have been!

AMELIA

(Coldly)

Well, I did not know that. Of course, I cannot marry you.

AMELIA walks away proudly, but her steps become quicker as she nears the door.

AL

Amelia, I love you! *(She disappears.)* Really, Amelia, there aren't any bananas on San-Lazar! *(Laughs so hard he is barely able to speak)* Dearest Amelia! So kind and loving...

AL takes out the list and erases with satisfaction another name.

ESMERALDA, a petty blond woman, peeps in. AL hastens to put the list in his pocket.

ESMERALDA

Here you are! Have you been hiding from me?

AL

Esmeralda, darling! How did you know I was looking for you?

ESMERALDA

(Coquettishly)

I didn't, but here I am. *(Comes in; looks around)* What a charming little room!

CINDY makes a face at this. ESMERALDA sits down on the sofa.

AL

Lovely, isn't it? Reminds me so much of my room in the sanatorium!

ESMERALDA

Sanatorium?!

AL comes and sits very near to her.

AL

You know, the mental sanatorium. Such nice people! Quite crazy and awfully rich. I really had the time of my life there.

*CINDY is trying hard not to laugh.
ESMERALDA moves slightly away from AL on the sofa.*

ESMERALDA

But they said you have been in Europe... or Africa.

AL emits a slightly mad laugh.

AL

What did you expect them to say? That the Crown Prince is a raving lunatic? I am not, of course. Raving, that is. But this is what they all think.

ESMERALDA

Excuse me... I am not feeling well... I... I need some air.

AL hastens to draw back the curtain and looks very surprised to find CINDY there. She smiles and puts her finger to her lips. AL nods and goes back to ESMERALDA, who shrinks at the end of the sofa, as far away from him as possible. AL's acting becomes even more extrovert now that he knows he has an audience.

AL

I have the most wonderful memories from there! Climbing the drainpipe in my pajamas! What an experience! *(Speaks in a slightly distracted manner)* I believe I thought it was the shortest way to the moon. Shall I get you one?

ESMERALDA

One—one what?

AL

A moon. It's so nice and shiny! You will love it! (*Stares into the air dreamily; Esmeralda silently horrified*) By the way, mother already gave instructions to prepare the bridal suite there.

ESMERALDA

Where?!

AL

In the sanatorium, silly! They only let me out to choose the bride... (*Mimics a low serious voice*) "Mustn't let a madman wonder freely in the sane society..."

*He laughs to himself happily and crazily.
ESMERALDA is frightened out of her wits. AL
kneels before her, grinning madly.*

AL (CONT'D)

Esmeralda, love, you will marry me, won't you?

*ESMERALDA faints. CINDY is about to rush
forward but changes her mind and stays where
she is. AL glances towards the curtain.*

AL (CONT'D)

God, what shall I do with her now?

*He rushes to the flowers' vase, pulls the flowers
out and pours the water on ESMERALDA. She
recovers, gives a little shriek and staggers out of
the room, looking back only to make sure he is
not following her. AL watches her go and then
turns to the curtain.*

AL (CONT'D)

All right, you can come out now.

CINDY comes out trying to stifle her laugh.

CINDY

Is she all right?

AL

Probably. I think I got a little carried away.

CINDY

Just a little. Whose turn it is now?

AL drops on the sofa, looking very pleased with himself.

AL

Praise God, no more brides! All finished! Hallelujah! Time to enjoy myself! Come, sit down and keep me company.

CINDY sits down on the other end of the sofa. They look at each other and burst into mad laughter. AL calms down a little.

AL

So how was I?

CINDY

Oh, brilliant! I loved every moment. Especially the cannibals!

AL

(Surprised)

How long have you been hiding there?

CINDY

Long enough.

AL

You must admit I dealt with them very cleverly.

CINDY

Yes, poor girls.

AL

You shouldn't pity them. They took no pity on me. I am exhausted!

CINDY

(Mocks him)

Poor thing! Shall I go, then? *(Pretends to get up)*

AL

No! No, please! I had such a terrible evening. I do deserve some amusement! Stay and talk to me. First thing, who are you? One of the guests, of course... But shouldn't you be in the ballroom?

CINDY

No. There are people there I don't want to meet. But you should be there.

AL

No. There are people there I don't want to meet.

CINDY

(Leans back comfortably)

Then we can stay here. *(Pause)* Who would believe that balls can be so amusing...?

AL

Have you been at many?

CINDY

This is my first.

AL

Then I am glad you enjoy it.

CINDY

Those Hulu ... are they really cannibals?

AL

No. They are good friendly people. Much simpler than you and me, and probably much nicer.

CINDY

You do make them sound nice. And that island – San-Lazar...It sounds nice too. Of course to be really perfect it must have some very steep mountains, which you can climb, and a lovely beach with no one in sight.

AL

If I ever find a place like that I will take you there.

CINDY

(Seriously)

Thank you, you are very kind.

AL

And after that you can have a year with the Hulu tribe.

CINDY

A year would be just right. Enough to make friends, but not enough to make it difficult to leave. I get used to people, you know, even when they are not kind to me.

AL

I can't imagine people not being kind to you.

CINDY

You lack imagination. *(Stands up)* Well, it's been nice meeting you.

AL

You are not going?!

CINDY

I think I should. And I really think you should go back to your guests.

AL

Goodness, why?

CINDY

Because it is your ball! And they are your guests. And you are expected...

AL

Oh, I am used to expectations. I grew up on them. You know, an only child and all that. The expectations are immense. I really tried to comply for a while, but it is useless. An only child is always a disappointment to his parents.

CINDY

(A little sadly)

I wouldn't know.

AL

Believe me, there is no way to keep them happy. Take this ball, for example. I agreed to take part... The least I could do... tradition, you know. But my terms were clear; I will not commit myself. If I don't find someone I like, there will be no wedding.

CINDY

And you did not find her?

AL gives her a quick glance.

AL

I don't know. The night is still young. *(Jumps to his feet)* All right, I will go back. But you must dance with me.

CINDY

I ... I cannot dance.

AL

Oh, come on, neither can all those girls out there. Only they wouldn't admit it before a firing squad.

AL pulls her after him. CINDY resists, laughing.

CINDY

No, please!

AL
It's all right. I will take my chances.

CINDY glances nervously towards the sofa where ARABELLA and ANABELLA sat before, but it is empty now. They go out.

BLACKOUT.

ACT II: Scene 7

SETTING: *The ballroom in the Palace.*

AT RISE: *The MUSIC IS PLAYING. GUESTS, including HOOPER, stand around the dancing floor, among them YOUNG GIRLS, some quite pretty. AL and CINDY appear and start dancing. EVERYONE watches.*

AL
You are doing very well. (*CINDY treads on his foot.*) Auch! Of course, there is room for improvement.

CINDY
It's because you distract me all the time.

AL
Sorry. I will try not to.

CINDY
(*Bumping into someone*) So sorry! (*She and AL go on dancing.*) It is crowded! And some of the girls are so beautiful.

AL
Really? So tell me: which of those heavenly beauties will be the least nuisance as a queen?

CINDY
How would I know? You cannot tell such things in advance.

AL
I must take a chance, then. Would you like to try my luck?

CINDY
No; nor mine.

AL

Do you think you would be a nuisance?

CINDY

Do you think you would?

AL laughs. The MUSIC CHANGES and Cindy concentrates on new steps, but then she sees THE STEPMOTHER.

CINDY (CONT'D)

Oh!

CINDY tries to avert her face unsuccessfully, and then puts her head on AL's shoulder. AL raises an eyebrow.

AL

I think I like this dance better than the others.

CINDY

I am tired. Can we stop now?

AL

Anything you say.

He leads her out. Everybody's eyes follow them.

BLACKOUT.

ACT II: Scene 8

SETTING: *The small hall that leads to the Mirror Room.*

AT RISE: *ARABELLA and ANABELLA are standing near the sofa where they sat before.*

ANABELLA

I am getting sick and tired of this place! *(Sits down)*

ARABELLA

Anabella, no! We have spent hours on that sofa!

ANABELLA

So? No one asked us to dance anyway. And they say the prince has already chosen.

ARABELLA

(Gloomily)

Her?

ANABELLA

Who else? Couldn't take his eyes off her!

ARABELLA also sits down.

ARABELLA

Anabella, look!

They jump up and start curtsying, smiling and nodding. AL and CINDY pass by, CINDY trying to avert her face as they exit into the Mirror Room.

ARABELLA

(Wistfully)

She is so beautiful.

ANABELLA

She laughs too much.

ARABELLA

You would too if you danced the whole evening with the prince.

BLACKOUT.

ACT II: Scene 9

SETTING: *The Mirror Room in the Palace.*

AT RISE: *CINDY and AL are seen coming into the room. They stop near the fireplace and look at each other.*

AL

That dance when you put your head on my shoulder...

CINDY

(Laughs; slightly embarrassed)

I simply had to hide from someone. But then I looked in one of those big mirrors and saw that I shouldn't worry. No one can recognize me. I hardly recognize myself.

AL

You look lovely.

CINDY

That's what I mean.

AL

You are strange. I do not understand you, no matter how I try.

CINDY

If you did, it would be the end of the evening for me.

AL

(Beat)

I might marry you, you know.

CINDY

No, you won't.

AL

You don't seem very enthusiastic about it.

CINDY

Should I be?

AL

Could you at least pretend that marrying me might... just might be a nice idea?

CINDY

I could; and you would hate it.

AL

You read me too well.

CINDY

Don't forget that I spent the whole evening with you – even when you didn't know it.

AL

No. I don't think I will ever forget that. But really, wouldn't you like to be a queen?

CINDY

I never thought about it.

AL

I find that hard to believe. After all, you came to this ball.

CINDY

I really didn't mean to. And as for being a queen – no, I don't think it would be right for me.

AL

(Hurt)

Well, that was a rhetorical question, anyway. *(Pause)* Tell me about yourself.

CINDY

What?

AL

Something... Everything...

CINDY

You ask too much.

AL

I am the prince. I am used to asking too much.

CINDY smiles slightly and shakes her head.

BLACKOUT.

ACT II: Scene 10

SETTING: *The hall that leads to Mirror Room.*

AT RISE: *ARABELLA and ANABELLA are sitting on the sofa.*

ARABELLA

(Sighs)

So all this fuss was for nothing!

ANABELLA

Yes. Mother will kill us. *(Pause)* Oh, here she comes! And I already have such a headache.

THE STEPMOTHER appears and walks purposefully towards THE STEPSISTERS.

THE STEPMOTHER

Silly girls! What are you doing here? Shouldn't you be in the ballroom?

ANABELLA

Why?

THE STEPMOTHER

You think you can catch a husband while loafing on this sofa? Really, Anabella, with your looks you should at least use your brain.

ANABELLA looks furious.

ARABELLA

It's not our fault.

THE STEPMOTHER

And whose fault it is, may I ask? Do you think the prince will chase you to this forsaken corner?

ARABELLA

Well, he is in there.

She gestures vaguely towards Mirror Room.

THE STEPMOTHER

He is? Clever girls that you are! And when is he getting out?

ANABELLA

At the end of the ball, probably.

THE STEPMOTHER

Oh no, he isn't!

She moves resolutely towards Mirror Room.

ARABELLA
Mother!

ANABELLA
Mother, no!

THE STEPMOTHER goes in. THE STEPSISTERS gape at each other and rush after her.

BLACKOUT.

ACT II: Scene 11

SETTING: *The Mirror Room.*

AT RISE: *AL and CINDY are standing by the fireplace looking at each other. THE STEPMOTHER barges in.*

THE STEPMOTHER

(Curtsies)
Your Highness!

AL
(Unpleasantly surprised)
Yes, what is it?

The STEPSISTERS come in but stay near the entrance. CINDY steps back, averting her face. ANABELLA looks embarrassed. ARABELLA stares openly at AL. Pause. THE STEPMOTHER looks desperately for a suitable opening.

THE STEPMOTHER

Such a wonderful ball! My girls are quite delighted!

AL
Indeed!

THE STEPMOTHER

We simply must thank you for inviting us!

AL
Everyone was invited. But I am glad you are enjoying yourselves.

THE STEPMOTHER

(Urging STEPSISTERS to enter)
Oh, here they are! Come here, girls! Tell his Royal Highness how much you admire the palace and everything.

The STEPSISTERS come close.

ARABELLA

We do, Your Highness, the palace and everything!

*ANABELLA shrugs apologetically, as if saying:
“There was nothing I could do”.*

THE STEPMOTHER

(To CINDY)

You look very familiar, my dear. Haven't we met at the Duchess Anastasia?

CINDY

(In a high shrilly voice)

I am afraid not.

AL looks at her, surprised.

ANABELLA

Come, mother, you don't even know the Duchess.

THE STEPMOTHER

(Ignoring ANABELLA)

Then at the spring ball of Lady Fairfax?

ARABELLA

(Naively)

But, Mother, Lady Fairfax hasn't been speaking to you for years.

THE STEPMOTHER

(In a loud whisper)

Quiet, you silly geeses! Who do you think I am doing this for?

CINDY tries to hide a smile.

THE STEPMOTHER

(To AL)

You must forgive my daughters their manners, Your Highness! They are so young, both of them.

AL

(Impatiently)

They are forgiven. You may go now! I am sure you are needed in the ballroom.

THE STEPMOTHER

Your Highness is very kind!

HOOPER hurries in.

AL

Ah, Hooper! Just the man I need. Please escort these ladies to the ballroom! *(Turns to THE STEPMOTHER and THE STEPSISTERS)* Just follow Hooper. He will take excellent care of you, I am sure.

THE STEPMOTHER

(Beaming at HOOPER)

Count Hooper! I hope you remember our little talk.

HOOPER

(Horried)

Madam, I... *(Recovers turns to AL gravely)* Your Highness, they are waiting.

AL

What, already?!

HOOPER

I am sorry. *(Glances at CINDY)* But maybe you are ready for them, after all?

AL

Am I? *(To CINDY; a sense of despair)* What shall I tell them?

CINDY

(Still changing her voice a little)

Who?

AL

My parents! Everyone!

CINDY

Tell them you are off to Africa. *(Speaks encouragingly)* Come, you are used to expectations. Or choose! There's a ballroom of girls waiting ... and hoping.

THE STEPMOTHER shoves ARABELLA and ANABELLA forward a little.

AL

I don't even know most of them.

CINDY

You shouldn't have stayed here the entire evening. I told you so.

AL

Wouldn't matter much anyway! And you didn't—

THE CLOCK BEGINS STRIKING.

CINDY

Oh God, it's midnight! *(THE CLOCK SOUNDS another strike)* I am late! And he must be waiting...

AL

Who?

CINDY

(On her way out)

Peter!

CINDY is seen stumbling in the hall She loses her shoe but goes on, limping.

AL

(Stunned for a moment)

Who the hell is Peter?!

AL runs after CINDY. HOOPER looks around at THE STEPMOTHER and THE STEPSISTERS who smile expectantly at him. HOOPER hesitates only a moment and quickly follows AL.

ANABELLA

Now what?

ARABELLA

Well, he did tell us to follow Hooper.

THE STEPMOTHER

That's right, dear. Such a nice young man! His Highness' best friend, I heard it said. And he seemed so fond of you girls...

ARABELLA hurries out without waiting for her to finish.

ANABELLA

Arabella, wait! Don't!

She is too late. ARABELLA stumbles over something in the hall, stoops down and picks up the shoe then runs on. ANABELLA turns to THE STEPMOTHER.

ANABELLA

It's all your fault!

THE STEPMOTHER

What are you talking about?

ANABELLA

(Gives up)

Oh, nothing!

BLACKOUT.

ACT II: Scene 12

SETTING: *In front of the Royal Palace.*

AT RISE: *It is rather dark, but a few torches give some light. AL stands there, looking doubtful and forlorn. HOOPER runs in, and then, seeing AL, freezes.*

HOOPER

(Concerned)

Your Highness...

ARABELLA appears behind HOOPER, comes closer, and hesitates. They don't notice her.

AL

Go away, Hooper!

AL turns and sees ARABELLA. She curtsies, slightly in panic. Something falls from her hand on the ground. ARABELLA picks it up hurriedly and puts her hands behind her back. AL goes to her and puts his hand forward, silently. ARABELLA, with the expression of a child caught misbehaving, puts a small white shoe in his outstretched hand. AL turns from her and starts walking away. ARABELLA speaks as if to herself, although possibly to HOOPER.

ARABELLA

Not that I mind, really, it wasn't even a pair or anything. But he could say "Thank you".

AL freezes, turns to her, bows coldly.

AL

Thank you, Madam.

ARABELLA tries to curtsy confusedly, but AL turns to HOOPER.

AL

I told you to leave me alone.

HOOPER stares silently at the floor. ARABELLA retreats slowly, unnoticed by them, and goes out.

AL (CONT'D)

Fine, if you insist on staying, you may as well make yourself useful. Go and tell everyone that His Highness Prince Albert chose no damned bride, and is going back to Africa. (*HOOPER does not move.*) Why are you still here? Do as I say!

HOOPER turns to leave. AL speaks quietly, his hand covers his eyes.

AL (CONT'D)

No, stay, Hooper, it is my duty, not yours. I will face them myself. (Flares up suddenly.) And don't look at me like that! I don't need your pity! Go away! And take this with you!

AL throws the shoe into HOOPER's hands and storms off.

BLACKOUT.

ACT II: Scene 13

SETTING: *The Ballroom in the Palace.*

AT RISE: *THE STEPMOTHER is standing in the middle of a group of guests, obviously enjoying the attention. ANABELLA is near her, looking uncomfortable. THE QUEEN is seen behind with other guests.*

THE STEPMOTHER

And she ran off! Just like that! I couldn't believe it!

A WOMAN GUEST

Come, Madam, no one runs away from the Prince!

ANABELLA

Well, it looked like running.

ANOTHER WOMAN GUEST

Don't be silly, girl! He probably just changed his mind about her, and what could she do but leave. (Turns to a rather young and shy looking girl beside her) Well, Jemima, what are you waiting for? He is still single! Do something about your hair, will you?

There is a general murmur. MOTHERS in the crowd turn toward THEIR DAUGHTERS who start straightening their dresses, etc. Suddenly everyone falls quiet and turn to the doorway, where PRINCE AL stands looking in. He walks in, head high. THE QUEEN moves towards him. She looks a little unsure of what is going to happen. AL approaches her and bows coldly.

AL

Madam, no bride was chosen!

There is a general gasp. THE QUEEN speaks, her voice changing from unsure to angry.

THE QUEEN

But ... but what happened?

AL

Nothing, Madam! She wasn't on my list.

He bows again and walks out. No one tries to speak to him. Even THE QUEEN looks dumbfounded.

BLACKOUT.

ACT II: Scene 14

SETTING: *AL's room. The room, too modestly furnished for a prince, includes a bed and an armchair with a table beside it. There are however some exotic souvenirs from AL's travels.*

AT RISE: *AL is sitting in the armchair, looking tired and dejected. HOOPER walks in, holding the shoe.*

HOOPER

I thought you might want this, Sir.

He puts the shoe down gently on the table.

AL

She walked out on me! And you bring me a shoe! (*Picks up the shoe disgustedly and then drops it back onto the table*) Who the hell does she think she is? (*Calms down somewhat*) Who was she anyway, Hooper? And who was that Peter she mentioned?

HOOPER

I really haven't the slightest idea.

AL

(*Impatiently*)

Well, find out!

HOOPER

How? All we have is one shoe.

AL

Would a pair make any difference?

HOOPER

N-no! Didn't you ask her for her name?

AL

I was too busy showing off. Oh, damn! Why did she run away, Hooper?

HOOPER

Maybe she did not care for your company.

AL

Oh, but she did, Hooper, I know she did.

HOOPER

We only have your word for it. (*AL glares at him; HOOPER looks down*) You have all the others. Why her?

AL

(*Shrugs helplessly*)

I don't know.

HOOPER

And if you find her, what then?

AL

When I find her? I will make love to her, or marry her, or give her hell. Not necessarily in that order.

HOOPER

(*With some bitterness*)

You will marry her. I would!

AL looks at him attentively.

AL

So this is the vanishing beauty that you were so keen to marry!

HOOPER

It's but a joke for you.

AL

I am sorry. *(Pause)* You may go now, Hooper. It is late. Too late, probably...

HOOPER turns to go. AL stares absent-mindedly at the shoe. He speaks without looking at HOOPER.

AL (CONT'D)

And, Hooper, time will heal everything. Even this dreadful youthfulness of yours!

HOOPER

(Coldly)

Good night, Your Highness.

AL

Good night. Sleep well – if you can.

BLACKOUT.

ACT II: Scene 15

SETTING: *Night; HOOPER's room in the Palace. The room looks very much like AL's room*

AT RISE: *HOOPER is asleep in his bed. AL storms in.*

AL

You will tear down every house in this kingdom, but you will find her for me. *(Pause)*
Hooper! Why are you still in bed?

HOOPER

(Half asleep)

Because it's 4am, You're Highness?

AL

Never mind all that. Get up and find her!

HOOPER

(Sitting up)

Right away, Sir! Where would you have me look?

AL

Everywhere!

HOOPER

(Lies back down)

Just ... let me die in peace, Sir.

HOOPER's eyes close. AL shakes him, not too gently.

AL

Later, Hooper, later! You have work to do. *(Turns to walk away; stops)* Oh, and don't forget the shoe!

He takes the shoe out of his pocket, tosses it on HOOPER's bed and walks out.

HOOPER

Please, not that shoe again! What am I supposed to do with the shoe?!

BLACKOUT.

ACT III: Scene 1

SETTING: *LADY GEORGINA's room in CINDY's house.*

AT RISE: *LADY GEORGINA, in dressing gown, is combing her hair before the mirror. She rubs in some cosmetics and checks the results, looking very unsatisfied. CINDY walks in slowly. She is barefoot, her dress torn and dirty. She is holding a shoe in her hand. LADY GEORGINA drops her comb.*

LADY GEORGINA

My God! What happened?

CINDY goes to LADY GEORGINA's bed and sits down wearily. She looks disoriented.

CINDY

I ... am not sure. I ran away...

LADY GEORGINA

And where the hell is Peter?

CINDY

I think there was an accident... he swears the horse was drunk!

LADY GEORGINA

He must be alright then, the worm! But have you been at the ball? Did you meet the prince? What happened there?

CINDY

I am telling you, I don't know!

CINDY buries her face in her hands.

BLACKOUT.

ACT III: Scene 2

SETTING: *LADY GEORGINA's room in CINDY's house.*

AT RISE: *CINDY lies on the bed, asleep. LADY GEORGINA sits in an armchair by the bed. She stands up suddenly, goes to the heavy curtain that hides the window and opens it a little. The voice of the ROYAL HERALD is heard now quite clearly.*

THE HERALD (OFF)

Hear, hear! His Royal Highness Prince Albert announces hereby, that he will marry the girl whose feet are small enough ... Hmm... (*Clears his throat.*) ... to match the shoe lost at last night's ball!

LADY GEORGINA

Marriage! He can't!

She glances swiftly back to the bed, then closes the window, but THE HERALD's voice is still heard.

THE HERALD (OFF)

This girl, whoever she is, must be able to produce the other shoe or prove the shoe has been in her possession during the ball. Hear, hear!

CINDY stirs, raises her head.

CINDY

What is it? Lady Georgina? ...

LADY GEORGINA

(Gently)

Nothing that concerns you, my dear. Go back to sleep!

CINDY closes her eyes obediently.

BLACKOUT.

ACT III: Scene 3

SETTING: *HOOPER's room in the Palace.*

AT RISE: *HOOPER, dressed and completely awake, stands near the window listening. THE HERALD's voice is heard clearly through an open window.*

THE HERALD (OFF)

This girl, whoever she, is must be able to produce....

THE HERALD'S voice gets further and further away. AL walks in. He is wearing a dressing gown, his hair is disheveled, and he looks as if he woke up just now.

AL

I don't remember promising to marry whoever fits the shoe.

HOOPER

(Confused)

You didn't? But you sounded so sure about it!

AL

To be honest, I don't really remember much about last night.

HOOPER

Neither do I, Sir.

AL

Hmm. We'll just leave it, then?

HOOPER

I really can't think of an alternative.

AL

(Beat)

So, did she come to claim me for her husband yet?

HOOPER

I am not sure...

AL

How come? I thought you of all people should recognize her...

HOOPER

Well, if Your Highness would care to look out the window...

AL goes to the window, opens it. DOZENS OF FEMALE VOICES, angry and excited, reach him. He closes the window, shutting the voices down, and turns to HOOPER.

HOOPER

I... I didn't think about that.

AL, seized with panic, grasps Hooper's shoulders and shakes him.

AL

Hooper, what if it fits?!

HOOPER shrugs helplessly.

BLACKOUT.

ACT III: Scene 4

SETTING: *LADY GEORGINA's room in CINDY's house.*

AT RISE: *LADY GEORGINA sits in her armchair. CINDY is still asleep in her bed, almost hidden under the blanket. THE STEPMOTHER peeps in.*

THE STEPMOTHER

Oh, Lady Georgina, I do hope you are better!

LADY GEORGINA

(Truthfully)

Far from it!

THE STEPMOTHER

(Untruthfully)

Oh, I am sorry to hear it. *(Walks into room; doesn't notice CINDY)* We had such a wonderful time. The Prince himself was so attentive to me and my daughters!

LADY GEORGINA

Indeed? *(Grimaces)* I do believe my headache just started again.

THE STEPMOTHER

A cup of tea will do you good, I am sure. It's just that I can't find that lazy girl.

LADY GEORGINA

If you mean my goddaughter, Madam, she is resting and I do not wish her to be disturbed. I trust you can make a tolerable tea.

THE STEPMOTHER

Me?! While my kitchen-maid is having her rest!

LADY GEORGINA

Just so! Milk and sugar, please! I will be in the drawing room. *(Walks out)*

THE STEPMOTHER

Lady Georgina!

THE STEPMOTHER hurries after LADY GEORGINA. CINDY groans and sits in bed. ARABELLA rushes in.

ARABELLA

Cindy, what are you doing in here—I've been looking everywhere for you! But never mind! Cindy, he is coming! The prince is coming! I need my yellow dress! And the hat too! Cindy, wake up!

CINDY

W-what?

ARABELLA

Didn't you hear the Royal Herald?

CINDY

I heard nothing.

ARABELLA

The prince wants to marry the girl with the shoe!

CINDY

What?!

ARABELLA

I mean, the girl without the shoe. Because she lost it! And I was the one who found it and gave it to the Prince. Isn't it strange? Do you think he might marry me if he doesn't find her? Oh, here it is again! Just listen!

THE HERALD (OFF)

Hear, hear! His Royal Highness Prince Albert announces hereby, that he will marry the girl whose feet are small enough ...

CINDY listens for a while, pale and shocked, then lies down and turns to the wall.

CINDY

Go away, Arabella. Leave me!

THE HERALD'S VOICE fades out. The voices of ANABELLA and THE STEPMOTHER are heard.

ANABELLA (OFF)

Cindy!

THE STEPMOTHER (OFF)

Cinderella, I need you in my dressing room! At once!

CINDY does not move.

ARABELLA

(Stamps her foot)

I won't be ready for him! And it will be your fault! *(Runs out)*

BLACKOUT.

ACT III: Scene 5

SETTING: *LADY GEORGINA's room in CINDY's house.*

AT RISE: *LADY GEORGINA is packing her clothes.
CINDY comes in looking pale and tired.*

CINDY

They wouldn't let me go. And I am exhausted. *(Notices the open trunk and other signs of packing)* You are not leaving! Lady Georgina! *(LADY GEORGINA goes on with her packing.)*
How can you leave me now?!

LADY GEORGINA

It seems you are doing just fine. *(Looks at CINDY who looks hard at the floor)* Do you still have the other shoe?

CINDY

Yes. *(Slightly anxious)* Do you want it back?

LADY GEORGINA ignores the question. CINDY goes to the open suitcase, pulls some clothes out, folds them neatly and puts them back.

LADY GEORGINA

So what are you going to do about it?

CINDY

(Goes on with folding)

I don't know. It seems...

LADY GEORGINA

...that he loves you? Or he wouldn't be looking for you?

CINDY

Yes.

LADY GEORGINA

I am sure he was quite impressed. And it is all so very romantic, isn't it? And of course, now he committed himself publicly... Still, if he knew...

CINDY

Knew what?

LADY GEORGINA

Your *position*, shall we say?

CINDY catches the sight of herself in the mirror. She ceases working, and just stands there for a moment, gazing at herself. She is definitely not at her best.

CINDY

You mean he will regret this public proposal? (*LADY GEORGINA is silent.*) I wouldn't marry him anyway. But if he loves me ...

LADY GEORGINA

If he loves you...

CINDY straightens up and faces LADY GEORGINA.

CINDY

Don't you care what becomes of me?

LADY GEORGINA

(Truthfully; but for a different reason)

I do, very much so.

CINDY

And still you are leaving...

LADY GEORGINA

I am sure you will be fine. As you said yourself, there is a big world out there.

CINDY closes the suitcase carefully.

CINDY

Yes. Probably... Goodnight, Lady Georgina.

She turns and goes out without another word. LADY GEORGINA doesn't look happy with the conversation.

BLACKOUT.

ACT III: Scene 6

SETTING: *THE kitchen in CINDY's house. The kitchen looks disordered, even dirty.*

AT RISE: *CINDY sits on her unmade bed, gazing vacantly before her, her hair disordered, She looks very miserable. Suddenly she starts. THE HERALD's voice is heard outside.*

THE HERALD (OFF)

... His Royal Highness Prince Albert announces hereby...

CINDY

Oh, not again!

She jumps up, runs to the window and slams it shut.

THE HERALD (OFF)

(Voice fading slowly)

... that he will marry the girl whose feet are small enough...

CINDY puts her hands on her ears and goes back to her bed. ANABELLA and ARABELLA storm in. CINDY takes her hands off her ears.

ARABELLA

It's so dark in here!

ANABELLA

Look at this place! It looks like a pigsty!

CINDY

I don't care.

ANABELLA

(To CINDY, angrily)

Now, look, you cannot go on like this. You don't clean! You don't cook! For goodness' sake, what happened to you?

ARABELLA

And the clothes aren't ready! And he might come any moment now!

CINDY

I don't care if he comes. Anyway, I don't want him here!

ANABELLA

(Mocking)

Of course, the kitchen will be the first place he will turn to.

ARABELLA

(Runs to the window)

Quiet! I think I hear voices. They are here! They are coming at last!

ANABELLA

Cindy, hurry and open the shutters in the drawing room! They might think we're not at home!

ARABELLA

I am going to faint!

ANABELLA

Why? It doesn't concern you. With your "hooves", you don't stand a chance.

ARABELLA

Anabella, you are always mean to me! If he doesn't marry me, I hope he marries you! That will be a proper punishment for him.

CINDY

(Wakes up)

The Prince?! He is here?!

ARABELLA

(Still at the window)

Oh, here's the shoe! And Hooper is coming too! Ooh, he looks so handsome!

*THE STEPMOTHER's voice is heard outside.
She sounds frantic.*

THE STEPMOTHER (OFF)

Girls! Girls, where are you? Come at once!

ARABELLA and ANABELLA hurry out.

CINDY

He will see me! Like this! I cannot bear it.

ANABELLA pops her head in.

ANABELLA

Cindy, don't you dare to show yourself while the prince is here!

CINDY

(Bitterly)
Oh, don't worry!

ANABELLA disappears. CINDY runs to the door and tries to catch the sounds from outside.

BLACKOUT.

ACT III: Scene 7

SETTING: *The drawing room in CINDY's house.*

AT RISE: *THE STEPMOTHER and the sisters are bustling around the room, trying to tidy up and finish their preparations.*

THE STEPMOTHER

Quickly, girls! Here is the shoe-horn. And I brought the corn ointment too.

ARABELLA

What for?

THE STEPMOTHER

So that the foot will go in smoothly, you goose!

ANABELLA

Not hers, it won't!

ARABELLA

(Starts to take her shoes off)

Mother, may I cut my toe? Do you think it will hurt? I am sure it will make a difference.

ANABELLA

(Laughing hysterically)

Which one: the right or the left?

ARABELLA

(Puzzled)

I don't know.

ANABELLA

Well, you should. After all, you found that stupid shoe!

The FRONT DOORBELL RINGS. THE STEPMOTHER drops the shoehorn. They look at each other. ARABELLA tries to put her shoes on while getting to the door.

THE STEPMOTHER

Where is that girl! It is not suitable for us to open the door ourselves!

The DOORBELL RINGS again.

ANABELLA

Damn it, will you open that door before they go away!

THE STEPMOTHER looks shocked. Before she has time to answer HOOPER comes in. He sees THE STEPMOTHER and the STEPSISTERS and clearly wishes himself in any other place. He is followed by THE FIRST SERVANT who carries a very long list of names, and THE SECOND SERVANT with the shoe in a richly adorned box. THE STEPMOTHER and THE STEPSISTERS curtsy. ARABELLA curtsies so low that she almost falls.

THE FIRST SERVANT

Is this the house of the Honorable Misses? ...

THE STEPMOTHER

It is indeed, and you are most welcome, gentlemen!

AL comes in. He looks cross and tired. When he sees THE STEPMOTHER and THE STEPSISTERS he rolls his eyes up in despair. Then he moves aside and stays there.

THE SECOND SERVANT

Now which young lady will be the first?

ARABELLA

Me!

ANABELLA

Me!

THE FIRST SERVANT

In alphabetical order, if you please.

ARABELLA is confused. ANABELLA's face lights up.

ANABELLA

It is still me!

She sits down quickly. THE SECOND SERVANT bows and takes the shoe out of its box. ANABELLA grabs the shoe and tries to put it on. Slowly her expression changes to one of a deep disappointment. AL gives a sigh of profound relief and catches ANABELLA's eyes on him. Embarrassed, he tries to hide it by coughing. ARABELLA jumps up with childish impatience.

ARABELLA

It's me, it's my turn now!

THE SECOND SERVANT

Please sit here, Miss.

ARABELLA is so much in a hurry that she almost falls down from the chair. AL rolls his eyes in despair.

THE SECOND SERVANT

Miss, you are not supposed to use a shoehorn.

THE STEPMOTHER

And why not? It is a shoe!

THE SECOND SERVANT

(Sternly)

We have our instructions!

THE STEPMOTHER

(Hysterically)

It fits! It fits!

AL looks as if he is going to faint. ARABELLA looks up at her mother, slightly confused.

ARABELLA

It does?

THE SECOND SERVANT

But, Miss... Madam...

THE STEPMOTHER

All right, so the heel sticks out a little bit! Does it really matter?

AL is ready to faint with relief now.

THE SECOND SERVANT

I am sorry Madam, the instructions are quite clear.

ARABELLA gives the shoe back and bursts in tears.

THE STEPMOTHER

It can't be the right shoe! It's a child's shoe!

THE FIRST SERVANT

(Checking his list)

I see there is also a certain Cinderella residing here...

THE STEPMOTHER

(Recovers swiftly)

Oh, yes, the kitchen-maid. Lovely girl, indeed! Got married last week...

ARABELLA opens her mouth to say something, but ANABELLA kicks her, and ARABELLA remains silent.

AL

Which spares us a pair of feet! Must be thankful for small mercies!

HOOPER

To the next house, then!

THE FIRST SERVANT gets entangled in the list.

THE FIRST SERVANT

Sorry, Sir. Is it the beginning or the end?

AL

The end, if you ask me. Back to the palace, all of you!

THE SECOND SERVANT

But, Sir, we still have the whole of Hangman's Road!

AL

Hang the Hangman's Road! Hooper, next time you come up with one of your brilliant ideas, remind me to throw you to dogs.

HOOPER

(Unhappily)

Yes, Sir. You might consider a guillotine too.

AL

Come, Hooper, we are not French.

THE STEPMOTHER

Sir... Your Highness, if I might say—

A loud scream from CINDY is heard from the direction of the kitchen. AL springs towards the door.

BLACKOUT.

ACT III: Scene 8

SETTING: *The kitchen in CINDY's house.*

AT RISE: *CINDY stands on the kitchen table, holding her dagger.*

CINDY

Somebody, help! It's the same one, only his tail got longer!

AL rushes in, and freezes. The dagger slips from CINDY's hand and falls on the floor with a clatter. For a moment they stare at each other. Then he speaks, in an impossibly cold and formal manner.

AL

Miss Cinderella, I presume.

CINDY nods unhappily. He goes to the table and helps her get down.

AL

Were you attacked?

CINDY

No. They just scare me to death.

AL

I see. Who?

CINDY

The mice. *(Unhappily)*

ALL THE REST arrive: HOOPER, THE SERVANTS, THE STEPMOTHER and THE STEPSISTERS. Something in AL's face tells them to keep silent. HOOPER stares at CINDY.

AL

Well, did you hear the announcement? (*She nods.*) And didn't you think that maybe, just maybe, I am entitled to some kind of an answer? It's very simple. "Yes" or "No" would be quite sufficient.

CINDY

I thought you would be gone by now.

AL

So sorry to disappoint you!

THE STEPMOTHER

(*Trying to save the situation*)

Sir, it is only our kitchen-maid.

AL

The one who got married?

CINDY

I didn't, and I won't!

AL

I assumed that much when you didn't show up.

CINDY

I am sorry.

AL

Sorry?! After publicly proclaiming my intentions and my idiocy, all I get is "I am sorry"?

CINDY

Look around! This is my home. Those are my stepsisters! And now look at me! How do you like it?

AL

(*Looks at her critically*)

Hmm... My mother's hairdresser might do wonders.

CINDY

And you said yourself that ... that ...

AL

Yes? What was it I said?

CINDY

It doesn't matter. And anyway, I have other plans.

AL

So did I! To go back to Africa! To climb the Everest or some other crazy mountain! To go around the world! And the fact remains that I was ready to give up everything for you. While you just sit here, quiet as a mouse...

CINDY

Don't!

AL

... pleased with yourself. Why not? Let the poor fool chase his own shadow!

CINDY

You think it was just a game for me? You are wrong! It was hell every time I heard that wretched Herald of yours! Knowing that all I had to do was to go out and...

AL

Precisely!

CINDY

And I just couldn't...

AL

Wrong answer!

CINDY

It is the only answer I have. (*Defiantly*) And I want that shoe back. It is not mine, and I have to return it.

AL

Pity! I thought to keep it as a souvenir. Wouldn't want to forget all those feet!

He looks at her for a moment and then turns and goes to the door, which opens suddenly. LADY GEORGINA is standing there dressed for a travel. AL is completely taken aback.

AL (CONT'D)

Lady Georgina?! You, here?!

It is clear she didn't expect the meeting, and isn't happy about it.

LADY GEORGINA

What a lovely surprise! (*To CINDY*) So you have company. I thought it was just you and the mice! Still it's a nice opportunity to wish you all good morning before I go.

AL

Ah, but is it such a good morning?

LADY GEORGINA

That depends on what you make of it.

AL

Yes, quite. Well, seeing you here I must conclude you have some part in all this mess.

LADY GEORGINA

(Modestly)

Oh, no! I am just a godmother.

CINDY turns to AL, confused.

CINDY

You know her?

AL

Oh yes. *(To LADY GEORGINA)* And by the way, how is my esteemed cousin Binky?

LADY GEORGINA

Fine as usual!

AL

Any entanglements that I didn't hear about? But then I suppose you make sure there are none.

LADY GEORGINA

But of course!

CINDY watches them, trying to figure out what is going on.

AL

Carry on, then! With your help he might make a decent king one day.

LADY GEORGINA

How can you say that, when we all hope to dance at your wedding?

AL

You are such a bad liar, Lady Georgina.

LADY GEORGINA

(Looks quite shocked)

Your Highness!

AL

(Suddenly tired of it all)

Ah, why should I care! After all, what do we have here? A silly shoe worn by a foolish girl!

He walks out without looking at CINDY.

CINDY

I didn't ask for any of it! And I don't care either!

She grabs the shoe from its box, and whirls it after AL. OTHERS look stunned.

THE SECOND SERVANT

(To CINDY)

Madam, you could hurt His Highness!

CINDY

I hope I did!

THE FIRST SERVANT folds the list of addresses nervously.

HOOPER

(To CINDY)

I am sorry about this. *(Turns to go then to CINDY, desperately)* Would you consider marrying me?

CINDY

No! *(Calms down and speaks quite kindly)* Look, you can see for yourself how impossible it is.

HOOPER

I can. But I had to ask. Good day to you all, ladies!

HOOPER walks out. The rest of AL's men follow him.

LADY GEORGINA

My dear Cinderella, it seems you are irresistible!

THE STEPMOTHER sinks on Cindy's bed, stupefied.

THE STEPMOTHER

So help me God!

ARABELLA

Couldn't he take one of us, since she didn't agree?

ANABELLA

He?! Which one of them you mean?

ARABELLA

Either, I suppose.

THE STEPMOTHER

Oh, be quiet! Cindy, make some breakfast. I mean... Arabella, you do it!

CINDY

(To ARABELLA)

Yes, you, you stupid cow! Because I've had enough of all of you!

ARABELLA gapes at her. CINDY turns to LADY GEORGINA.

CINDY (CONT'D)

I think you owe me an explanation.

LADY GEORGINA

I owe you nothing. You had your little adventure. A prince asked for your hand in marriage. What else do you want?

CINDY clearly doesn't have an answer to that. PETER comes in.

LADY GEORGINA (CONT'D)

Ah, Peter! Is my carriage ready?

PETER

Yes, Madam, what is left of it.

LADY GEORGINA

(Wearily)

Thank you, Peter.

She moves to the door, but CINDY blocks her way.

CINDY

Wait! Who is Cousin Binky?

THE STEPMOTHER

(With malicious delight)

Bernard, Count of Solsbery, known mostly as Binky, who in certain circumstances might pretend to the throne!

CINDY

What circumstances?

THE STEPMOTHER

In case His Highness Prince Albert dies without leaving an heir. Am I right, Lady Georgina?
In which case the relationship between you and the Count might become...

CINDY

(To LADY GEORGINA)

Is it true?

*LADY GEORGINA is busy putting her gloves on
and doesn't answer. CINDY stamps her foot.*

CINDY

Are you or are you not the wife of this Count Something?

LADY GEORGINA

I am not. But I will be.

CINDY

(Speaks slowly and carefully)

I think I understand. I wasn't supposed to marry him. I was supposed to prevent his marriage.

LADY GEORGINA

My dear, with your charm and my art I really hoped for the best. Such a pity dear Albert got carried away. He is really too romantic for his own good. Still I cannot imagine his mother accepting a lowly orphan as a daughter. *(Gently)* But, Cinderella, it doesn't matter now, does it?

CINDY stares at the floor, but looks up suddenly.

CINDY

I made him suffer.

LADY GEORGINA

He will recover.

CINDY

You are my Godmother! I trusted you!

LADY GEORGINA

Well, don't blame your trusting nature on me. Come, my dear. You know your value now. Go on! Leave your kitchen!

ARABELLA

(In panic)

She cannot leave! I never made a breakfast in my life!

CINDY

(To LADY GEORGINA, coldly)

Please go now!

ANABELLA

(To CINDY)

You fool! She might become a queen one day.

LADY GEORGINA

(To ANABELLA)

Thank you, my dear. I do need some encouragement right now.

LADY GEORGINA goes to the door.

CINDY

Queen or not, I will never forgive you!

LADY GEORGINA shrugs and goes out. CINDY steps forth dazedly and finds herself before the broken mirror at the wall. She stares into the mirror for a moment then turns suddenly to THE STEPMOTHER.

CINDY

(Curtsies)

What would you like for breakfast, Madam? It seems your kitchen-maid stays! I can't go out into the world now, I might run into him. It is too small, the world.

ARABELLA

Can I have eggs and bacon?

CINDY stares at her, and ARABELLA steps back, scared.

This is Not the End of the Play
Ending Intentionally Omitted for Security Purposes