

CINDERELLA AND THE BIRKENSTOCKS

A Full-Length Comedy Play

by
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ACT 1

Scene 1

AT RISE: CINDERELLA's living room. CINDERELLA lives with MOTHER, ALEXIS, and HILDA. This room can be simply furnished; it's an "average American family" in contemporary times. A couch and a couple of chairs will do nicely, plus a TV and a few accessories. Since all the sisters are "eligible" to marry the prince, they should be played as older teens or college-aged. The set can reflect colors and interests of a home occupied by these four characters. As the scene opens MOTHER is busy straightening up the living room. ALEXIS enters willing to help. Until CINDERELLA appears they play the opening lines "sickeningly sweet."

ALEXIS: I've finished my homework, Mother. Is there anything I can help you with?

MOTHER: Well yes, Alexis, You can fold the laundry for me.

ALEXIS: Thank you for the opportunity!

MOTHER: **(calling)** And Hilda Jean?

HILDA: **(enters, sweetly)** Yes, Mother?

MOTHER: Why don't you put away the dishes from dinner?

HILDA: You know I'm always happy to help.

MOTHER: And I'm so fortunate to have two wonderful caring daughters.

ALEXIS: It's how you and dad raised us.

ALL: **(stop what they're doing and face the front)** May he rest in peace.

MOTHER: Well, let's see if Cinderella will sweep the floor.

HILDA: **(a little afraid to disturb her)** I'm sure she's busy. I'll do it.

MOTHER: No. Eventually she needs to learn to pull her weight around here. Cinderella? Cinderella?

ALEXIS: **(to HILDA)** When will mom ever learn?

MOTHER: **(losing patience)** Cinderella, where are you?

CINDERELLA: **(enters dancing to an iPod or some other musical device.)** What?

MOTHER: You need to sweep the kitchen floor.

CINDERELLA: **(starts to dance a bit and sing along to the music, "in your face" to everyone else)** You can't make me sweep the floor, I'm not gonna sweep no more. . .

MOTHER: Cinderella!

CINDERELLA: **(sings, almost haphazardly, as if it's a song SHE's listening to)** You're not my real mother, and you can't tell me what to do! No, no, no, you can't tellllll me what tooooo dooooo. **(this goes on awhile, MOTHER pulls the earplugs out of CINDERELLA's ears)**

MOTHER: Cindy!

CINDERELLA: I told you never to call me that.

MOTHER: I need you to sweep up in the kitchen. My back hurts.

CINDERELLA: **(mocking)** My back hurts!

MOTHER: **(annoyed)** My back hurts from picking up all that bling you dropped behind the toilet seat.

CINDERELLA: Well maybe your back needs some exercise. I'm right in the middle of my favorite song and **(sweetly)** I'd appreciate it, in the future, if you would keep your gentle motherly hands **(loud!)** off my iPod! **(if it's not an iPod, refer instead to whatever device SHE's listening to)**

MOTHER: Did you do your homework?

CINDERELLA: I thought I told you. . . I don't do homework. My teachers know better than to waste my time with hommmmmework. **(Puts the earpieces back in and sings.)** Homework is just such a waste. Don't throw them schoolbooks in my face!

MOTHER: **(yanks out the ear pieces)** I thought I told you no iPod until you finish your homework.

CINDERELLA: Well it's not like I heard you, seeing how I was listening to my iPod when you allegedly said that.

HILDA: **(excited, to MOTHER)** I got an A+ on my history test. Did you know that Eleanor of Aquitaine led a revolt against her own husband Henry II?

CINDERELLA: Big whoop! I'm gonna lead a revolt against having to sweep the floor!

ALEXIS: And I got an A+ in my Hawaiian lessons.

MOTHER: I'm so proud of both of you! **(Pause, while they all look at CINDERELLA)**

CINDERELLA: I got an A+ in celebrity gossip. (**playing like SHE's a TV show host**) Britney? Life's a party! Deadly! Dixie Chicks? Grammy winners extraordinaire! But watch yo' mouth! Brad Pitt? Adopts African children to keep them away from Oprah. Ben Affleck! Handsome but boring. Nobody cares, too bad, so sad. Paris Hilton? Love those burgers, but she needs to eat some of them. Don't eat and drive, Paris!

MOTHER: What about your school work?

CINDERELLA: That *is* school work. Now if you'll excuse me and even if you won't. . .

MOTHER: I need you to sweep the floor.

CINDERELLA: You might *want* me to sweep it, but you don't *need* me to sweep it. (**SHE conspicuously and deliberately puts the earphones back in, and exits, singing. . .**) Mom can't make me sweep that floor, 'cuz Cinderella's out the door!

HILDA: The floor's so dirty because she stomped her French Fries.

ALEXIS: Too much ketchup. What a pig.

MOTHER: Now don't talk bad about your stepsister.

ALEXIS: That's what *she* does. She spreads rumors about us in school.

MOTHER: Again? What's she saying now?

HILDA: That we're smart. That we do our homework, get straight A's, and help around the house.

MOTHER: That's wonderful!

ALEXIS: Try getting a date with that kind of reputation. Why are we stuck with her?

MOTHER: She has nowhere else to go.

HILDA: She drove her own father out of the house!

MOTHER: I know. My second marriage was to a wimp. A wuss. A lousy provider. A bum. A layabout. A thief. A loudmouth. And worse yet, he instilled all his personality traits into his daughter and left us with her while her ran off with some floosie to Las Vegas.

ALEXIS: I never heard that floosie part.

HILDA: I never heard that Vegas part.

ALEXIS: Last time mom went on this rant, it was a hussy to Havana.

HILDA: How did they get to Cuba? We're not even allowed to go.

MOTHER: Stop it!

ALEXIS: (**to her mother, with rising intensity**) Well, what did he do? Really? And why couldn't he take Cinderella with him? What kind of divorce lawyer did you hire? Some idiot from Ipanema? (**accent the third syllable of Ipanema for correct pronunciation.**)

MOTHER: Settle down. Every time we talk about Cinderella, we start fighting.

HILDA: It's hard not to. We live with her.

CINDERELLA: (**enters**) Will you keep it down? I can't hear my tunes!

(SHE holds out her iPod towards them and does a couple dance steps to demonstrate as the others do a slow burn; blackout.t)

SCENE 2

(A room in the palace. This should be opulent, but in bad taste. The set can display the usual type of decorations in a palace, overdone furniture, tapestries, etc. Tapestries of popular musical groups or musicians, like the old velvet Elvis pictures, could be a nice touch. The KING is seated on his throne at center stage working a crossword puzzle. There can be a "not-as-nice" seat next to him for the QUEEN, or perhaps even a rickety lawn chair, so there's a conspicuous difference between where the KING sits and where the QUEEN sits. the prince's TUTOR enters in a hurry.)

TUTOR: Your majesty! Your majesty!

KING: (**barely looking up, more interested in his crossword**) You know you're not supposed to address the king unless he addresses you first.

TUTOR: A thousand pardons, your majesty.

KING: Try it again. Observe protocol. I'm tired of having to tell you this.

TUTOR: (**short pause, then HE exits, then enters, looks at KING, who ignores him. HE clears his throat, then HE whistles. Then HE goes in front of KING and jumps up and down. Then HE tickles the KING. The KING laughs hysterically but still won't address him after HE stops and just goes back to his crossword, so the TUTOR walks away and starts to talk to himself as if in soliloquy.**) If his majesty would acknowledge me I would tell him some very important information about the prince. Information that affects the future of the kingdom. If only his majesty would. . .

KING: (**looking at the crossword**) What's a seventeen letter phrase for "Angelina's adoption?"

TUTOR: Listen to me!

KING: That's ten, and has nothing to do with "Brangelina." Does the tutor have something he'd like to discuss with my majesty?

TUTOR: (**finally! HE kneels before the KING.**) It's the prince, your majesty.

KING: Oh come on, Call me Tony.

TUTOR: Tony?

KING: That's my name. Now get up.

TUTOR: Tony.

KING: I don't like that tone of voice. I'm still the king. Now what's a seventeen letter word for-

TUTOR: (**tired of this**) Tony!

KING: My subjects treat me with such disrespect.

TUTOR: (**giving in**) African indignity.

KING: What?

TUTOR: Seventeen letters. Why should we think a child will be better off simply because he grows up in America?

KING: Do they have McDonald's in sub-Saharan Africa?

TUTOR: I don't think so.

KING: Exactly. (**looks over the puzzle and tries to write**) It doesn't work.

TUTOR: Will his majesty listen to me!?

KING: His majesty may, if you're interesting.

TUTOR: Your son. the prince. My student. He refuses to do his lessons. He won't learn his Hawaiian and he refuses to study any history before 1824.

KING: 1824?

TUTOR: (**during this speech HE's all over the stage, pacing in frustration**) It's the year Beethoven wrote his ninth symphony. He says anything before then is irrelevant. I've tried to get teach him about the fourth, the fifth, you know.

. . . (**sings the opening bars**) ba ba ba baaaaaaaaaaaaa. . . but he'll have none of it! I'm at my wits end, but I fear in the case of an emergency, he will be ill equipped to assume the responsibilities as king.

KING: An emergency only Beethoven can fix.

TUTOR: (**doesn't want to say**) You know. . . should the kingdom need. . . new leadership.

KING: You mean. . .

TUTOR: If you dropped dead, your Majesty – er, Tony. If your condition kicks in, we're in deep doodoo.

KING: My condition? How did you know about my condition, James?

TUTOR: Everyone knows about your condition. It's a condition of being a very unpopular ruler. It often results in death by assassination. And don't call me James. As your son's tutor, I demand to be treated with respect. Call me Mr. Matheny.

KING: Call you Mr. . . .

TUTOR: Yes, Tony. Call me Mr. Matheny. Now, if you don't discipline your child, the heir to this kingdom, I'm going to be forced to take matters into my own hands.

KING: There's a law here against spanking royal hiney.

TUTOR: Perhaps that law can be amended.

KING: With that attitude, *you* can be amended.

TUTOR: And with your "condition," so can you. I'd hedge my bets that a lot more people would prefer to rule the kingdom than tutor the prince. So I really wouldn't prattle on about who was *amendable* and who wasn't, if I were you.

KING: I think we need to marry him off. Nothing like a good woman to keep him in line. (**calling off stage**) Zerelda!

ZERELDA: (**enters and bows**) Yes, your majesty.

TUTOR: Call him Tony.

ZERELDA: (**with a curtsey**) What would you ask of me. . . Tony? (**to TUTOR, almost a whisper**) That is so stupid!

KING: Fetch the queen. I have an important matter to discuss.

ZERELDA: (**SHE's "official" but a bit sassy**) The queen wishes not to be disturbed.

KING: Fetch the queen. Certainly I have some authority over *someone* in this palace.

ZERELDA: Certainly you have no authority over your wife.

KING: You're the lady's maid, are you not?

ZERELDA: One of about forty, yes. Remember, we "came with" when you bought out that old Motel 6 on 52nd street.

KING: Then I suggest you do as I bid you to do. . .

ZERELDA: The lady is taking a bath.

KING: Again?

ZERELDA: It's the same one. She's been in there for three days.

KING: I need to discuss some very important royal matters with her. We need to find our son a wife.

ZERELDA: I'll do it. I know he's a handful, but I can tame him. **(to TUTOR)** We call him "His Geekiness" behind his back. But I can put up with *Star Trek: The Next Generation* reruns to be the next queen of the United States of America. That Riker guy is sooo hot!

KING: I think not.

ZERELDA: **(egging him on)** Oh, come on. I want to be the queen! You know, rags to riches, lady in waiting to ready and dating, that kind of thing.

KING: Well, if you can answer one question.

ZERELDA: **(approaches him, expectantly)** Yes, your majesty.

KING: Seventeen letter word for "Angelina's adoption."

ZERELDA: **(Thinks it over, walking around a little bit, finally it comes to her in a flash!)** Oprah's hot jealousy.

KING: **(counts, while ZERELDA jumps up and down with glee)** There's an apostrophe in there, it doesn't count.

ZERELDA: Leave it out. It's a crossword.

KING: **(writing it down and says firmly)** You're not marrying the prince!

ZERELDA: **(a little whiny)** You said I could!

KING: I changed my mind.

ZERELDA: **(a little more whiny)** That's not fair.

KING: The king doesn't have to be fair. Now, summon my honey hither.

ZERELDA: **(shouts off stage)** Yo! Mistress! His majesty bids you hither! **(short pause)**

KING: Now.

ZERELDA: Now!

QUEEN: **(off stage)** Tell him I'm busy.

ZERELDA: She's busy.

KING: Tell her I said now.

ZELDA: **(shouting off stage)** He says he said now!

QUEEN: Did you hear what I said? Reiterate it!

ZERELDA: The queen reiterates, your majesty.

KING: You tell her that-

ZERELDA: I'm sorry, but once she reiterates, there's nothing more I can do.

QUEEN: **(enters, wet if possible, with a very heavy robe, a bit miffed at being summoned)** What? I was taking a bath.

TUTOR: Wait a minute, why does she get to address thee without first being spoken to?

QUEEN: Because I'm his wife! And if I was *your* wife I'd treat you the same way.

TUTOR: If you were my wife I'd-

QUEEN: What? You'd what?

TUTOR: I'd. . .

QUEEN: Because frankly, I don't think you would. **(holds his head)** Some one in this room is very lucky we outlawed head chopping. And just last week, too! **(almost a whisper to TUTOR)** I'm lobbying to change it back. **(SHE releases his head)**

KING: Essie, we need to find our son a wife.

QUEEN: A wife?

KING: A wife.

QUEEN: I'd hate to do that to *any* girl until he grows out of his science fiction phase. Why suddenly does he need a wife?

KING: I need to teach him responsibility. If he can learn to handle a wife, then he can learn to handle the kingdom.

TUTOR: **(thinking)** You can't handle your wife, or the kingdom. And your son can't handle a simple Hawaiian lesson.

KING: **(to QUEEN, a bit sarcastic)** You know more women than I do, since you never let me talk to any. Can you recommend someone who's beautiful, pretty, charming, witty, seductive. . .

QUEEN: Seductive?

KING: It's his wife. She should be seductive! **(to TUTOR)** I wish I'd have thought of that sooner!

QUEEN: **(never thought of this)** Oh. **(thinks again)** I thought marriage was just a political arrangement to keep a hostile nation from invading. Well at this level, anyway. The subjects can marry for love, if they so choose. *We* need to marry to save our necks.

KING: I don't want that for our son. I want a woman who's a good influence on him; who's gentle, and kind, and. . .

TUTOR: Deserves better.

KING: If he's our son, he should have his pick of the litter. Any woman in the kingdom that he desires shall be his.

QUEEN: What if she's not interested?

KING: I fail to see where that's a consideration.

QUEEN: Tony-

KING: Essie!!

QUEEN: Tony!

KING: What?

QUEEN: (**has a great idea!**) Let's do what we usually do. Remember when we got him his first car? We had every automaker present their finest model right here on the palace grounds. And when we got him that video game collection, we had every producer come here for an electronics show. And I'll never forget the scoop throwing contest between Ben & Jerry's and Cold Stone Creamery!

KING: Me either. You put on 15 pounds in a weekend.

QUEEN: (**annoyed but trying not to show it**) I think we should allow him to pick from the finest young, eligible women throughout the kingdom. I think we should throw him a ball.

KING: A what?

QUEEN: A ball.

ZERELDA: (**approaches the QUEEN gingerly**) Um. . . your ladyship? Nobody throws balls anymore.

QUEEN: Zerelda! I'm the queen. If I want to have a ball, I'm going to have a ball.

KING: What's a ball?

TUTOR: Dancing. Party down. Essentially it's "Boogie oogie oogie 'til you just can't boogie no more." But with class.

ZERELDA: It's a rave without the attitude. Or the drugs.

KING: No wonder nobody does it anymore.

QUEEN: A ball! I miss the days. Where I come from we had a ball a week! A ball for this, a ball for that. My father put a stop to it. We called him the wrecking ball. (**SHE starts to laugh but no one else is amused so SHE stops.**)

KING: I'm not sure it's the best idea. Our son. . . he has. . . no social skills. Unless you're a Klingon.

QUEEN: Men are born without manners. That's why they need wives. To nag them. And the louder the better. Zerelda! I want you to mail a letter to every family in the kingdom and have them send all eligible women to the palace!

ZERELDA: That's a lot of women. And a lot of letters.

QUEEN: Our son deserves choice! No more arranged marriages in this family.

ZERELDA: Is the palace big enough to hold every eligible woman in the kingdom? Do you think this is some sort of fairy tale?

TUTOR: She does have a point. It's a very large kingdom, and not that big a palace.

QUEEN: I think her point is she doesn't want to do as she is bid.

ZERELDA: What if I just email? Or send out a MySpace bulletin or something. I have over ten thousand friends. Letter writing is so antiquated.

QUEEN: We're a royal family steeped in centuries of tradition. We do not email. We do not MySpace.

ZERELDA: Actually, this monarchy isn't all that old. No one's quite sure how it even got here. Wasn't it just a very unconstitutional convention that-

QUEEN: Zerelda! You will do as you are bid!

ZERELDA: (**curtsies before the queen**) To bid is to do.

TUTOR: (**bows as well**) To do is to bid!

ZERELDA AND TUTOR: (**a lot less differential**) Do bid do bid do! (**they high five**)

QUEEN: Get to work, or off with your heads, law or no!

TUTOR: Tony, are you going to let her get away with that?

KING: I think I just might. It's time I reassert my authority around here.

QUEEN: Yeah right.

(Everyone else scoffs at him, then blackout.)

SCENE 3

(CINDERELLA's house. There's a knock at the door. SHE's once again dancing to some music. As SHE dances, the knock gets louder.)

MOTHER: Cinderella, will you get that please? (**silence, more knocking**) Cinderella?

CINDERELLA: (**sings**) Let me make this very plain. . . I'm your step-kid, not your maid. . . You don't like it but it's true. . . I won't get that door for you. . .

MOTHER: Get the door! (**enters**) Now!

CINDERELLA: Why? *You're* in here! *You* get it.

MOTHER: Now! Or no supper for you.

CINDERELLA: Cheez! Like I can stand your cookin. Okay, okay. (**opens, the door, it's a mail carrier.**)

CARRIER: I have a certified letter.

CINDERELLA: (**snooty**) Your *mom* has a certified letter. Why don't you take it next door where there might be someone with a pen to sign for it?

CARRIER: It's from his majesty's royal house.

CINDERELLA: I don't care if it's from his majesty's *monkey* house! I don't just *sign* things! Who knows what you're doing to do with my signature? Fraud? Identity theft! Capital One account?

MOTHER: I'll sign it. No one wants your identity. **(to CARRIER)** I'm so sorry for her behavior.

CARRIER: Most families just have a Rottweiler.

MOTHER: **(signs)** Thank you so much. **(exit CARRIER)**

CINDERELLA: **(nearby, pestering as MOTHER opens it)** What is it? Is it for me?

MOTHER: You didn't want it!

CINDERELLA: I do if there's money in it.

MOTHER: It's a royal invitation. The king and queen are having a ball.

CINDERELLA: I'm glad someone's enjoying themselves around here!

MOTHER: No, they're throwing a ball.

CINDERELLA: Good. It'll keep them in shape. **(shouting off stage, pretending to throw a softball)** Don't hit the windows! **(to MOTHER)** I'm so funny!

MOTHER: It's a shindig. Cha cha. Dance. Rave, "party, karamu, fiesta, forever."

CINDERELLA: They want me to come to the ball?

MOTHER: They want every eligible young lady in the kingdom to come to the palace.

CINDERELLA: How are they going to fit?!

MOTHER: When they start chopping off the heads of disobedient stepdaughters, I'm sure there will be a lot more room. Alexis! Hilda Jean!

ALEXIS: **(as they both enter)** Coming, mother!

HILDA JEAN: Yes mother, how can we help!

MOTHER: **(excited)** You can pick out your nicest dress and go to the palace where the prince wants to take a look at every eligible lady in the land and choose his bride!

ALEXIS: **(starts to get excited, then realizes it can't happen)** Actually, I can't. Cinderella borrowed my nicest dress and got a spot on it.

MOTHER: I'm sure we can clean it.

ALEXIS: It was acid, in the chemistry lab. So, no.

MOTHER: What was she-

CINDERELLA: I needed to impress someone. Through the magic of hydrochloric acid. **(thoughtlessly)** Needless to say it didn't work, buuut it wasn't my dress so whatever.

MOTHER: Fine. Put on your second nicest dress. We need to make a good impression on the prince! You never know when they'll reinstate capital punishment, but it's always best that it happens when you're not in a crowd of marriage-hungry women.

HILDA: Why are we living in a monarchy? I thought our country was a republic. "To the republic for which it stands. . ."

ALL: **(joining in)** "With liberty and justice for all."

HILDA: When did it change to liberty and justice for one?

MOTHER: **(delivers this as cheerfully as possible, but disappointed at the same time)** It was a balloting issue. We all thought we were voting for a democratically nominated candidate, but somehow when all the votes were tallied up, the Supreme Court intervened and ruled that we elected a constitutional monarchy. Then they ruled out the constitutional part. There were years of war, famine, and pestilence, and not a democratic election in sight. Finally the king married a princess from a formerly hostile nation, which possessed advanced nuclear weaponry but no domestic skills such as manufacturing or farming. We agreed to feed them if they agreed not to kill us. We traded liberty for safety, and now we have neither.

HILDA: How come they never talk about that in History?

CINDERELLA: Because the teacher dillies around and we can't get out of the 17th Century. Thanks to the ballot box, we're living there again. Your generation really blows, mother.

MOTHER: Your generation needs to sweep the kitchen floor, daughter.

CINDERELLA: Your generation needs to realize that-

ALL: "You're not my real mother and you can't tell me what to do.

ALEXIS: I'll do it. I'm tired of wading through six inches of pork rinds just to get to the fridge.

MOTHER: I want Cinderella to do it. She needs to learn responsibility before it's too late.

ALEXIS: But she won't.

MOTHER: Maybe it's because we let her take advantage of us.

ALEXIS: Maybe it's because she's a lazy, good-for-nothing, arrogant, mooch. Be that as it may, we've been unsuccessful in our attempts to civilize her. **(worried)** If the prince sees her like this at the ball, it's most likely off with all our heads.

CINDERELLA: They don't do that any more.

ALEXIS: Well they might start again. There is no safety in a rule-by-decree society. If you get an "F" in "Obeying the King" it's a much greater punishment than sitting in detention next to the smoking kids. So Cindy-kins. . . **(singing to mock CINDERELLA)** Get started moppin', or your head will be droppin'!

MOTHER: **(after a silence)** What she said, Cindy.

CINDERELLA: **(overreacting)** I have to do everything around here! **(exit)**

HILDA: We can't let her go to the ball and embarrass this family.

ALEXIS: How is anyone going to notice us when every eligible woman in the land is going to be at the palace?
HILDA: Does Cinderella *have* to go? No one will want to marry into our family if *she's* going to be their sister-in-law.
MOTHER: It's a royal decree. You all have to go.
ALEXIS: I think we're doing the prince a favor by keeping her home.
HILDA: I don't know if I even *want* to marry the prince. There's this really cute boy up at Burger King. He can flip and flame broil like nobody's business. (**romantic and dreamy**) And the fries!! Oh yes, yes, yes! I want fries with that!
MOTHER: Wouldn't you rather have a prince than a burger flipper?
HILDA: The burger flipper can feed me. the prince will probably just expect me to do his bidding.
MOTHER: Well, if he bids, you do.
HILDA: I don't want a do bid do bid do kind of marriage.
ALEXIS: Speaking of Scooby Dooby do, who's the band at the ball?
MOTHER: (**reads it over**) They're having a DJ. It's all techno trance.
HILDA: (**really annoyed**) Fine. Whatever. (**whisper**) Now we have to do something about keeping her out of the ball.

(They huddle together to discuss it as the lights blackout.)

SCENE 4

(At the Palace, KING, QUEEN, KEN, TUTOR, and ZERELDA. ZERELDA can be doing some demeaning odd job for the queen, like polishing shoes, helping with make-up, etc.)

KEN: (**HE's pretty darned nerdy, and HE can be dressed as some Sci-Fi character, if desired**) Mom, dad, I don't want to!
TUTOR: He's been impossible ever since I broached the subject.
QUEEN: Kensington, you will do as you are bid!
KEN: There's a *Stargate* SG-1 Convention that night. We're going through the wormhole to save another-world civilization from an oppressive royal tyrant. (**smugly and self-assured**) I won't even be on the planet.
QUEEN: Every eligible woman will be at the palace!
KEN: (**in all seriousness**) How are they going to fit?
TUTOR: That's what I keep asking.
KING: That's what *everybody* keeps asking.
KEN: What kind of dance are they going to do, the "stand in one place and don't move?" (**pouty, but HE strikes a posture trying to do that dance.**) Oh, this is fun. (**breaks his pose**) I don't even like to dance!
QUEEN: We'll hire you an instructor. You need to make a good impression.
KEN: I'm the crown prince. I don't need to make any kind of impression. I can hit up any babe-olotomous in the kingdom and command her to marry me.
KING: Actually, it doesn't work that way. No matter who you decide on, she still has to meet our approval.
KEN: What century is this?
QUEEN: It's the price we pay for absolute power. We have no control over our private lives.
ZERELDA: And the paparazzi! The tabloids are going to have a field day! Another installment of *Beauty and the Geek*.
KEN: See? In *Stargate* SG-1 I'm in another century entirely. I'm not bound by these antiquated conventions.
QUEEN: (**tired of this, but trying to break it to him gently**) That's fiction.
KEN: (**mortally offended**) No, it's not! Now I am going to the convention and we are going through that wormhole. And I might just not be back. Ever. (**snooty**) I might just find a wife on the other side and stay there.
KING: Tempting as that may sound for all of us, you need to find a wife *here*.
QUEEN: We're going to raise the cigarette tax so that the cost of the ball will be borne by the blue-collar crowd. We'll call it a "techno tax."
ZERELDA: That is so discriminatory.
QUEEN: Not really. When you're the queen, *everyone* is-blue collar. We're going to tax tractor pulls, country music CDs, barbecue sauce, Jack Daniels, and flatulence.
ZERELDA: (**everyone is surprised**) Flatulence?
QUEEN: You heard me. Every time someone breaks wind, they pay a tax. Since the national dish is refried beans, we stand to make a fortune. We'll have money coming out of our-
TUTOR: How do you expect to collect that revenue? Worse yet, who's going to monitor it?
QUEEN: It's been done before. We called it a flat tax.
KEN: I have some reruns I want to see. On *Star-Trek TNG* there's a mind meld coming up. And Cade, our dorky cousin, thinks you can't take a mind meld from *Star Trek-TNG* into the landscape of *Stargate* SG-1 and I'm going to prove to him once and for all that-
KING: (**appalled, almost shaking KEN**) Ken! You are the crown prince of this once-great nation. Could you please not be so nerdy?

KEN: You know what? Daaaad? I don't appreciate you making fun of me for being the way I am. **(pouty and ready to leave)** I'm going to go play with my action figures before the show starts.

KING: **(calling after KEN as HE exits)** You'd better enjoy it *now* because I'm selling them all on eBay!

QUEEN: All I can say, Tony, is you had better never die. We're involved in three foreign wars already, none of which are our business. We certainly don't need an intergalactic m  le   going on at the same time.

KING: Why not? It would be a good distraction.

QUEEN: Zerelda, you've sent out the invites, correct?

ZERELDA: Yes, my ladyship. I've done postal, e-mail, e-vites, flyers, posters, a media blitz, and a MySpace bulletin. I know you advised against it, but it's getting a lot of play. It demands you repost within fifteen minutes and twenty-one seconds or. . . **(she starts to laugh)**

TUTOR: What's so funny?

ZERELDA: The beans. . . I threatened them with beans.

KING: **(no sense of humor)** This palace does not condone fart jokes. They're not funny. And no one believes those MySpace bulletins.

ZERELDA: *Everyone* believes those MySpace bulletins. They pass it on because they're afraid it might come true. So I can guarantee you that every eligible young lady will be in the palace. Though Lord knows where they're going to fit. And with all those beans? I might have to ask for the night off.

QUEEN: Tony, there's something you need to know.

KING: What's that, Essie?

QUEEN: Fart jokes are always funny. Brilliant, Zerelda. Brilliant!

ZERELDA: **(as the scene ends and the lights are fading, almost as an afterthought)** Can I have a raise?

QUEEN: **(quickly)** No.

SCENE 5

(CINDERELLA's place, the night of the dance.)

MOTHER: **(calling offstage)** Are we all ready to go?

HILDA: **(enters, twirls around)** How do I look?

MOTHER: **(not altogether impressed)** Fit for a prince!

HILDA: **(explaining)** I heard the prince is a nerd, so I dressed accordingly.

MOTHER: He'll love you! **(calling)** Alexis!

ALEXIS: **(enters)** Ta da!

MOTHER: That's. . . interesting!

ALEXIS: It's Hawaiian.

MOTHER: Not that I've ever been to Hawaii. . . but I don't think *that's* Hawaiian.

ALEXIS: *I* call it Hawaiian. No one else will know the difference. Ever since Hawaii became an independent nation again, their flowered shirts have gone to the pigs.

MOTHER: **(hushed)** Where's Cinderella? Does she know of our plan?

ALEXIS: I don't think so. Why does she even live here? We're not even her family.

MOTHER: It's the court system. Your father. . .

ALL THREE: **(facing the front)** God rest his soul. . .

MOTHER: Your real father was a very nice man, who died all too young, leaving me with two beautiful girls I had to feed, clothe, and take care of. I needed – well I *thought* I needed – but I was young and unliberated at the time, a man to support my family. Your stepfather had just lost his wife, and we met over at the playground swing set. Back in the days when we still lived in a republic, when you knew who you were voting for. He had one young daughter and I had two.

ALEXIS: So you got married?

MOTHER: Quickly. But while *my* children were nice and mannerly growing up, *his* daughter was a psycho witch from Hades. We tried everything. Psychiatrists, psychologists, counselors, boot camp, a fat farm. . . Nothing worked. As years went by, we fought more and more about Cinderella's behavior. One day I told him to take his daughter and get out of the house. The court system, biased towards men since the recent conversion to monarchy, actually named me as the fit parent, even though I wasn't her real mother and once locked her in her room for six months straight. So. . .

HILDA: That's a sad, sad story.

ALEXIS: Especially since we all shared a room.

MOTHER: The really sad thing is. . . if there weren't three swings, none of that would have happened.

ALEXIS: We *should* send her to the ball. Maybe she'll marry the prince and get out of the house.

MOTHER: I'm afraid our whole family will be embarrassed. Royally embarrassed. I don't want to wind up on *Entertainment Tonight* as the family that mouthed off to Prince Kensington.

HILDA: So she doesn't know of our plan?

MOTHER: No.

ALEXIS: She's been getting ready for three hours.

CINDERELLA: (**enters, angry**) Where is the lavender rose-petal bath oil?

ALEXIS: (**goads her**) I used it.

CINDERELLA: I told you not to use the lavender rose-petal bath oil.

ALEXIS: It's mine. I won it at the flute festival.

CINDERELLA: I know it's yours. But I distinctly remember telling you *not* to use it! Great. Well it's going to take me awhile longer to get ready. And you'll just have to wait.

ALEXIS: But Prince Kensington commands the ball to start at 8 PM.

CINDERELLA: And as I've just so recently informed you, you'll have to wait. Only geeks show up to a party on time. (**Exit**)

MOTHER: Very well done, Alexis. While she's in there fuming over the lavender rose-petal bath oil. . .

HILDA: We run like heck to the car and GO!

(They push their way out of the house, then comes a sound effect of doors slamming and a car squealing and pulling away.)

CINDERELLA: (**enters**) I heard that. (**pause**) Mom? Hilda Jean? Alexis? (**Runs to look out a window or door, sees they're gone, then pulls out a cell phone, or picks up a phone in the house**) Mom! You turn that car around right now and come back and get me. Mom! I said *now!* (**Listens for a short while and is exasperated**) Yes, I know I'm not your real daughter and I can't tell you what to do. But I need to go to the ball! He's certainly not going to marry your ugly butt. Mother! Motherrrrr! (**Hangs up phone**) Where is family when you need them? (**Picks up phone again to dial**) Emily! Emily have you left yet? Oh, you're there already? Only geeks go to a party on time! No, never mind, I'll figure it out. (**Looks through her phone list, should she have a cell phone**) Who else, who else? Oh, forget it. . . (**Starts to cry**) I'll never get to the ball. I'll never get to meet the prince, I'll never get married, and I'll never be queen! (**checks her watch or a clock, stops crying, everything is fine!**) Oh wait, it's time for *One Tree Hill!*

(Enter SIMON and PAULA, it should be obvious that PAULA is a fairy godmother, a sound effect of bells as they enter indicate something magical.)

PAULA: (**sing songy, as CINDERELLA goes to turn on the TV**) Don't touch that remote!

CINDERELLA: What? It's time for-

PAULA: We have plans for you to go to the ball!

SIMON: (**looking over CINDERELLA's outfit.**) What are you going as, a can of sardines?

PAULA: Stop it! She's sensitive.

SIMON: So are sardines, yet she chooses to ignore their needs.

PAULA: Leave her alone!

SIMON: Okay. . . (**starts to exit**)

PAULA: Get back here!

SIMON: Make up your mind!

CINDERELLA: Who are you and what are you doing in my house!

SIMON: Are you that sheltered, my dear lady? Obviously, if you mistake that as fashion. . .

PAULA: We're Simon and Paula. Simon Howell and Paula Abdaula.

CINDERELLA: (**can't believe it**) From. . .

SIMON: Yes. . . from *American Idol*. And let me tell you, I love the fact that we've turned this country from a republic into a monarchy. When I host a show, I rule absolutely! My abuse is law.

PAULA: That's not true. I have just as much say, as you.

SIMON: Yeah, right. When I let you.

PAULA: Simon! (**starts to cry**)

SIMON: Save it! We have work to do. (**PAULA stops.**)

CINDERELLA: Unless you can give me a ride to the ball, which I doubt, you really have no business being here. And how did you get in, anyway? My mother is OCD about locking the door. And cleaning. I wouldn't mind lending a hand every now and then, but it's constant. You clean once and you have to do it for the rest of your life. I'm putting it off so I can enjoy my younger years.

PAULA: We're here to help. It's magic! *American Idol* has always been magic. (**inspirational!**) Look at the magic we did for Fantasia and Carrie Underwood. We can do that for you too!

SIMON: It's that, or Reuben Studdard.

CINDERELLA: Who?

SIMON: Exactly! We have power. Magical power. And we have the power to make the prince fall in love with you.

CINDERELLA: I hear he's a sci-fi geekasaurus.

SIMON: (**grandly**) The king and queen have commanded that all eligible ladies in the kingdom appear at his palace.

CINDERELLA: I know. How will they all fit?

PAULA: How do we get 17 million people to audition for *American Idol* when only 12 fit into the finalists? Where there's a will, there's a way.

SIMON: Not with you, Paula. With you there's only your way. (**to CINDERELLA**) She never cries backstage. It's an act. Backstage she's a raving lunatic.

PAULA: (**rabid, they start to scuffle**) That's because I have to work with you, Simon!

CINDERELLA: (**breaks them apart**) Can you two stop that for once and focus?

PAULA: (**takes a deep breath**) We're here to help you be a winner. We can make magic happen. Just like on TV.

CINDERELLA: Like a fairy godmother.

SIMON: A godmother, maybe.

CINDERELLA: I . . . can't . . . sing.

SIMON: You can't dress, either. That's our first assignment.

CINDERELLA: Why do I feel like I'm on *Extreme Teen Makeover* or something?

SIMON: Maybe it's because you need help. You're out of shape, out of style, and out of luck.

CINDERELLA: I am so changing to *Dancing with the Stars*.

PAULA: You'll be dancing with the prince tonight, young lady. He's got to boogie it up with every eligible lady in the kingdom.

CINDERELLA: In one night? That's like thinking Santa Claus can deliver toys to every child on the planet.

PAULA: Every *good* child.

CINDERELLA: I never got anything.

SIMON: Neither did I, and I'm proud of it. Now you need to go to your room.

CINDERELLA: Okay look, you *really* aren't my mother, and you *really* can't tell me what to do. I *need* to go to the ball. So if you're going to send me somewhere, at least send me somewhere interesting.

PAULA: You need to go to your room. When the hosts of *American Idol* come to your house to work a miracle, do you doubt their veracity?

CINDERELLA: Veracity, tenacity, vivacity. I doubt it all.

SIMON: (**means it!**) Go to your room! Because there *is* something going on!

CINDERELLA: Oh, all right. (**exit**)

PAULA: (**sings to the tune of the '80s song**) *I know there's something going on!*

SIMON: That song is so before her time. From the good years. . . after Abba split but before they came back as *Mama Mia*.

PAULA: I love this part. . . (**to the audience**) Ever since this country became a tyrannical monarchy, Simon and I have been endowed with magic powers.

SIMON: (**to audience**) It's great to be endowed with magic powers.

PAULA: We have no idea how it happened. . . but one day, we woke up, and we were endowed! So in our off hours, we're fairy godparents. You need that sort of thing in a land that's ruled by decree.

CINDERELLA: (**off stage**) Wow!

PAULA: (**overly excited**) She found them!!

SIMON: Calm yourself, Paula. You're bleating like a sheep in a wool factory.

(PAULA starts to cry.)

PAULA: That doesn't even make sense.

SIMON: You're right. My head is a jumble of verbal cruelty waiting to inflict itself on the sensitive and untalented. It doesn't always work. You're my guinea pig.

PAULA: (**calling offstage**) So. . . try it on! (**exaggerated sound effects of snaps, zippers, ties, and CINDERELLA struggling to get dressed.**)

CINDERELLA: (**Enters, finally, looking a bit out of place and unhappy.**) Where did this come from?

PAULA: You look stunning.

SIMON: She looks like a mule.

CINDERELLA: You're right, Simon. For once. (**more insistent**) Where did this come from?

PAULA: (**after a pause, a little embarrassed**) The Gap.

CINDERELLA: (**unimpressed**) The Gap.

PAULA: Clearance. You like?

CINDERELLA: Meh.

PAULA: (**urging her back to her room**) The shoes. . . the shoes. You have to try on the shoes.

CINDERELLA: If they're as uncomfortable as this dress. . .

PAULA: They're very special.

SIMON: They might even make *you* look attractive. Oh, what am I thinking?

CINDERELLA: (*exits, again a lot of squeaking and a struggle, she comes in without them*) What kind of shoes are those?

PAULA: You don't like them? They're glass.

CINDERELLA: That explains it. There's no give!

PAULA: They're glass. (*excited*) Glass slippers!

CINDERELLA: (*doesn't understand the concept, and for awhile is silent in disbelief*) Okay, whose really, really stupid idiotic idea was that?

SIMON: Mine, actually.

CINDERELLA: For that, you deserve to be locked in a room with William Hung singing Gilbert and Sullivan. For a week.

PAULA: We love them. Try them again. (*CINDERELLA balks, PAULA commands*) Now! If you want to become a princess with absolute power you have to learn to do what you're told.

(CINDERELLA exits, short struggle, a bit of screaming, then the sound of shattering glass.)

CINDERELLA: (*enters again*) You'd better clean that up before my mother gets home or it's your bee-hive.

PAULA: (*starts to cry*) You broke our glass slippers? (*stops crying*) You ungrateful, impossible. . .

CINDERELLA: Didn't you only have one album anyone cared about? Just one? *Forever Your Girl*. Hard to last forever with only one album, yet you just won't go away. Why are you still here? Why does anybody think you're important? Why does-

SIMON: Why do you think you can break a pair of shoes we got on loan?

CINDERELLA: Why did you want to send me to a *dance* in a pair of glass slippers? That's nothing but a very extravagant lawsuit waiting to happen. And I could use a really big settlement right about now.

PAULA: I think she's got us. Wait a minute. (*SHE casts a spell*) *Tresses, dresses, Dockers, shoes; I did it for Stoddard and I'll do it for you!* There you go. Birkenstocks. Earth shoes. Naturalizer. Go pick.

(CINDERELLA exits again.)

SIMON: Where did you get all that from?

PAULA: They're her sister's shoes. I just had them moved over to her room. I'm not as well endowed with magical powers as I'd like to be.

CINDERELLA: (*enters*) That's better. We're running late and I don't have a lot of time for choice. Are we ready?

PAULA: Almost.

(Snaps her fingers, and a FOOTPERSON enters.)

CINDERELLA: Who's that?

FOOTPERSON: I'm your footperson!

CINDERELLA: Well with all these stupid shoes, I'm not surprised. What does a footperson do?

PAULA: Uh. . . uh. . . uh. . . I don't know.

SIMON: Paula, your stupidity is stupendous! A footperson. . . a footperson. . .

FOOTPERSON: I do as I am bid. I help you into the limo.

CINDERELLA: (*perks up*) Limo?

PAULA: Beats horses and a pumpkin, doesn't it?

CINDERELLA: Horses and a. . .

PAULA: Cinderella! Horses, pumpkin. . . glass. . . did you miss first grade or what?

FOOTPERSON: Ma'am. . .

CINDERELLA: (*not impressed*) Ma'am. . .

FOOTPERSON: Let me escort you to the vehicle.

CINDERELLA: Escort? Can't I just get in the car?

FOOTPERSON: A car! (*offended, short of breath*) Did you call it. . . a car?

PAULA: (*woman to woman*) Cindy! Let's put it this way. You got peeps. You got a reality show host, a fairy godmother, and a footperson. . . *don't mess wit yo' peeps, cuz it gives us da creepz.*

CINDERELLA: Why did you pick me? Am I the only loser in the kingdom who can't get to the ball?

SIMON: Yes. To be blunt.

PAULA: Simon? Are you forgetting something?

SIMON: Am I? Am I forgetting to remind you that you like Clay Aiken?

PAULA: No. You never forget that. But we *are* forgetting the final piece of magic. (*SHE casts another spell.*) *Kelly, Carrie, Taylor, Clay, Be a good girl for the rest of the day.* Until midnight, you're not going to be the crass, unpleasant, ornery totalitarian wench that embarrasses your family and the entire human race. Tonight, you're going to be. . . a lady. . .

CINDERELLA: (*crass, and fighting it*) A lady! A lady. . . (*genteel, as we see her convert to a much more pleasant demeanor*) A lady!

PAULA: (*pleased that her spell worked*) A lady.

FOOTPERSON: Good, because I was about to snatch her baldheaded.

CINDERELLA: Shall we proceed? I'm anxious to meet the prince and learn the latest techno-trance dance steps.

FOOTPERSON: Please follow me.

CINDERELLA: Will you teach me the latest dance?

FOOTPERSON: In a limo? I'm a cabbie, not a choreographer.

CINDERELLA: What about a Paula Abdaula instructional video? I'll pick it up. I don't want to be any trouble.

SIMON: To until midnight, at least.

CINDERELLA: I'd never stay out that late. My mother would be worried sick!

PAULA: (*as CINDERELLA and FOOTPERSON exit, SHE catches them on the way out*) And remember, you *must* be home by midnight. Or the limo turns into a Yugo. The dress? Into Wal-Mart. The shoes? Into army boots. And your disposition? Into impossible. (*They exit. PAULA turns on SIMON*) Like you Simon. Impossible. I wish there was some way to make it work on you. (*tries to cast a spell*) *Heed me heed me, take this advice! Be nice! Be nice! Be nice!*

SIMON: Paula, your spell casting is only slightly worse than your taste in prom dresses. (*PAULA starts to cry*) And that was nice. (*Lights start to go out on PAULA crying, SIMON talks to audience*) It was nice. For me, it was nice. (*Lights out, PAULA bawls one more time.*) Oh, never mind.

ACT 2

SCENE 1

(A room at the palace. At the director's discretion, if some of the cast can dance or if "extras" are available, an upbeat dance number can open the act. This scene can be set in the throne room of the palace, or a different room that would be situated just outside the ballroom. After the dance, or at the beginning of the act, we see KAYLIN, a TV reporter, getting ready to address the camera. Next to her is FLOYD, a stuffy dance instructor who is her co-host for the event.)

KAYLIN: (*since SHE's a TV reporter, SHE can speak into a microphone; if available a camera person or crew can follow her around*) I'm Kaylin White.

FLOYD: And I'm Floyd Harvey.

KAYLIN: And you're watching KING-TV. We're here at the prince's ball, or dance-a-thon, as they call it, where the prince is meeting and dancing with every eligible woman in the kingdom!

KITTY: (*SHE's a very old woman and SHE forces her way in front of the camera*) This is great. I love techno! I can't wait for my turn!

KAYLIN: You're not eligible. You're at least 87 years old.

KITTY: My husband died 30 years ago, and I've been eligible ever since. (*insistent*) And I'm dancing with the prince!

KAYLIN: I don't think you're dancing with anyone.

KITTY: I don't think you make the rules. Aren't you just a reporter?

KAYLIN: Not *just* a reporter. But yes, I'm a reporter.

KITTY: Then your opinion is irrelevant. Mine, however, is newsworthy. (*"in your face" to the camera, perhaps grabbing the microphone from KAYLIN for a brief moment and knocking her out of the way*) I'm going to dance with the prince. (*exit*)

KAYLIN: (*putting herself back together*) Whatever!

FLOYD: How is every eligible woman in the kingdom fitting in the palace?

KAYLIN: A lot of corsets. And a new addition to the palace. Taxpayers money. (*to the audience, with a big smile*) You paid for it!

FLOYD: Let's see if we can get an interview with one of our lovely eligible *young ladies!* (*Enter ALEXIS; FLOYD stops her*) What's your name!

ALEXIS: I'm Alexis.

FLOYD: Have you had a chance to dance with the prince?

ALEXIS: It's pretty crowded in there, but yes. We did a rhumba, a samba, and a boss nova. To a techno beat. All in 45 seconds.

FLOYD: That's a lotta Latin.

ALEXIS: It's surprising, seeing how we're at war with Latin America.

KAYLIN: (*both FLOYD and KAYLIN silently agree that ALEXIS' outfit isn't stylish.*) What are you wearing?

ALEXIS: It's Hawaiian! I'm a Hawaiian major at school.

KAYLIN: It's a little loud.

ALEXIS: **(pleased with her response)** That's so I can be heard above the crowd!

KAYLIN: Don't you think it's in poor taste? How do you expect to impress the royal family by wearing clothes representing a state the king lost in a poker game?

ALEXIS: **(SHE has issues of her own)** I'd like to know whose idea it was to serve bean dip and cooked cabbage in a crowded dance hall! Oh, and there's another very odd thing. **(enter HILDA)**

KAYLIN: **(mysterious)** An odd thing. . .

HILDA: Yes, very odd.

KAYLIN: And who is this?

ALEXIS: That's my sister, Hilda Jean.

HILDA: **(as KAYLIN and FLOYD examine her outfit)** I know. Our stepsister spilled acid on all our good clothes. So I'm wearing this. But it goes well with the prince's sci-fi theme.

KAYLIN: Acid?

ALEXIS: Our stepsister's a bit of a-

HILDA: **(cutting her off)** Klutz. Klutz. What's odd, is there's someone here who looks just like her. But in a very nice dress. Retro. Prom, late nineties. Well, Gap late nineties. And Birkenstocks. She's dancing circles around the prince. He seems very impressed.

ALEXIS: And she's so. . . genteel.

KAYLIN: **(goading her for the TV audience)** So come on. Do you think *you* have a chance with the prince? Really?

HILDA: He's a sci-fi geek. I'm a history major. I'm past and he's future. I don't *want* to have a chance with the prince. But yeah, to be queen, sure. **(without much enthusiasm)** Darling, take me away.

KAYLIN: We're bringing you live-from-the-dance-floor coverage of the prince's Ball. I'm Kaylin White along with our dance judge Floyd Harvey. Floyd what do you think of the dancing so far?

FLOYD: I wonder why on earth he's going to pick a wife by how well she twirls in a Birkenstock. **(as if this answers all the world's problems.)** Nobody dances in a Birkenstock. The future of our kingdom is at stake and he's choosing his life partner out of the shoe department.

KAYLIN: The dancing, the dancing!

FLOYD: The dancing is dreadful, as expected. This country needs lessons. Lots of them. So call the Floyd Harvey School of Techno Trance Dance at 800-555-4545. **(slogantizing)** Floyd Harvey! Putting America back on its feet!

KAYLIN: Did you vote for this monarchy?

FLOYD: Nobody voted for the monarchy. It just happened. It seeped in through a crack in the constitution. Why do you ask?

KAYLIN: Because you're a *royal* pain in the-

FLOYD: Look, here comes Prince Kensington now!

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