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SIR OSBERT SITWELL'S

The Cinderella Complex

Dramatized by Ruth Fuller



THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY

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(THE CINDERELLA COMPLEX)

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The Cinderella Complex

A Play in Three Acts

FOR EIGHT MEN, TWELVE WOMEN AND EXTRAS

CHARACTERS

CINDERELLA	<i>herself</i>
SIR JAMES WILFER.....	<i>her father</i>
LILY LADY LAUGHTINGTOWER.....	<i>her stepmother</i>
PAMELA	<i>a stepsister</i>
DIANA	<i>a stepsister</i>
HUMPLEBY	<i>an old nurse</i>
FLORA	<i>the maid</i>
THE PRINCE	<i>himself</i>
THE HERALD.....	<i>attendant to the Prince</i>
BILL WHITTY.....	<i>a young atomic scientist</i>
DAME EVA.....	<i>the "good" fairy godmother</i>
DAME LILITH.....	<i>the "bad" fairy godmother</i>
LORD SCONE.....	<i>a family friend</i>
LADY SCONE	<i>his wife</i>
ELSPETH	<i>their granddaughter</i>
DEREK BANSTER.....	<i>a young Australian</i>
LADY CARPORT.....	<i>another family friend</i>
MILDRED	<i>her niece</i>
HUGH SACONY.....	<i>first television broadcaster</i>
JIM CARVEN.....	<i>second television broadcaster</i>
GIRL SELLING FACE CREAM	}
GIRL SELLING SILVER PLATING	

Guests at the Prince's Ball, friends of Pamela and Diana, additional attendants for the Prince, and guests at the receptions may be introduced as desired.

PLACE: *Wilfer Old Hall, in England.*

TIME: *Now and then.*

SYNOPSIS

ACT ONE, Scene One: *The living room of Wilfer Old Hall.
A late afternoon in spring.*

Scene Two: Six weeks later, morning.

ACT TWO: *Six months later. Autumn. Early evening.*

ACT THREE: *A day or so later.*

* * * *

Sir Osbert Sitwell's version of the Cinderella Story appeared in book form and also in *Harper's Bazaar*. Now as a delightful play it tells of a different Cinderella—or perhaps—The Case for the Wicked Stepsisters.

A new version of a fairytale to delight both children and the most sophisticated.

NOTES ON CHARACTERS AND COSTUMES

CINDERELLA: She is about seventeen years old, very fair and slender, with a fine complexion and small feet. She is extremely pretty and could be charming, if she chose to be. But she continually expresses her hidden resentments under the guise of seeming self-sacrifice. Though she passes as a martyr in the eyes of those about her, she is really materialistic, selfish and unkind. She wears a patched, black work dress and clumsy work boots except in the transformation scene. Then she appears in a stunning ball gown and glass slippers.

SIR JAMES WILFER: He is an attractive man, with hair graying slightly at the temples. Intelligent, generous and kind, he has learned tolerance in dealing with Cinderella's mother. He accepts his daughter's whining as he did his wife's, letting it pass at face value, for he loves her devotedly. He wears a well-tailored business suit at his first appearance and in Act Three. For the wedding he wears striped trousers and a cutaway coat, and a carnation in his lapel. He may wear a dress suit for the ball.

LILY LADY LAUGHTOWER: She is a good-natured, plump, middle-aged widow. Her hair is done in elaborate curls. With the hairdresser's assistance it still retains its youthful color. Her dress also carries on the tradition that time has stood still for her. She still wears what she found becoming when she was a handsome, rather florid young woman. Her natural sweet temper and kindness make up for the fact that she is not particularly interesting. For her first appearance she may wear a flowered silk with a rather too large pattern, and a small flowered hat. For the wedding she wears a dressy suit in some pastel color, a large corsage and another flowered hat. For the ball she wears a ball gown, a bit too bright and too bouffant for her age and figure. She wears another flowered silk in Act Three. She is never ridiculous—she merely overdoes matters a bit.

PAMELA: She is a very attractive girl of twenty, rather tall, with a good figure and an intelligent mind. She comes the closest to "seeing through" Cinderella. But her natural kindness prevents a realistic appraisal of her stepsister. In Act One she may wear a cashmere sweater and skirt. She dresses for the wedding in a pastel dress and flowered hat. In Act Two she wears a stunning ball gown with appropriate accessories. In Act Three she wears a becoming silk or wool dress suitable for a luncheon at home.

DIANA: She is nineteen years old. Like her sister, she is taller than Cinderella. She has beauty, poise and charm. She tends to accept Cinderella's complaints at face value and tries to placate her. She is deeply in love with Bill. Her clothes are similar to Pamela's.

HUMPLEBY: She is an elderly, faithful and competent servant. She knows what to expect of Cinderella, but never questions her motives. She has always given her uncritical love and complete loyalty. She wears a black or gray uniform with a utility-type white apron and cap.

FLORA: She is very pretty and is about eighteen. She has curly hair which refuses to stay tucked away under the perky white maid's headband she wears. She wears black or gray, with white cuffs, collar, and small white apron.

THE PRINCE: He is handsome, vain and frivolous. When he first appears in Act Three, he is swathed in a black cloak and hood which conceal his identity. When he throws this off, he may appear in a dazzling court costume. If this is not practical, a black tunic and tights with gold braid sewed on, or with a scarlet ribbon tied diagonally across his chest, will give the desired effect.

THE HERALD: He is rather cocksure and pert until he realizes Cinderella's new status, whereupon he becomes very subservient. He wears a typical fairy-tale costume which may be adapted from the Knave of Hearts as presented on playing cards. He may carry a gilt trumpet in his hand.

BILL: He is a young atomic scientist, brilliant, competent, absorbed in his work and in Diana. He has a natural chivalry which—temporarily—causes him to be taken in by Cinderella,

for he is always on the side of the oppressed. He wears a well-cut business suit.

DEREK: He is a tall, handsome young Australian, much interested in Pamela. He has a direct, breezy and informal manner. He wears well-cut business clothes.

DAME EVA: She is the "good" fairy godmother in the sense that she stands for the enduring values of life and believes in achieving them, not by spells and charms but by application and honesty. She is middle-aged, a bit plump, and speaks in a voice "of silver and sugar." She wears a white chiffon ball gown, a diamond star in her hair, and carries a glittering wand.

DAME LILITH: She is the "bad" fairy godmother in the sense that she seeks primarily worldly advantage, and uses spells and charms to obtain them. She is a striking-looking old lady. Her nose is prominent and nearly meets her chin. She wears a smartly tailored black skirt and coat. Her only jewelry is a diamond clip on her lapel. Her hair is cut short and she wears no hat. She carries an ebony cane.

LORD SCONE: He is a pleasant and intelligent man, in whom a passion for collecting antique china occasionally triumphs over his better nature. He is in late middle age. He wears striped trousers and cutaway for the wedding. At other times he wears a well-tailored business suit.

LADY SCONE: She is in late middle age. She wears an elaborate silk or lace dress for the wedding, with a fancy hat. For the luncheon she wears a plain, well-cut dark wool dress with a pearl necklace, pin and earrings and a colorful, close-fitting hat. She defers to her husband, is a bit envious of her friends, and shows some fondness for her granddaughter.

ELSPETH: She is the rather outspoken granddaughter of the Scones. She is pretty and may wear a cashmere sweater and skirt for the luncheon, or an informal silk dress with suitable accessories.

LADY CARPORT: She is middle-aged and rather a gossip. She wears an elaborate silk dress to the wedding, with a flowered hat. For the luncheon she wears an afternoon dress or suit in a becoming color with a small, close-fitting hat. She is peremp-

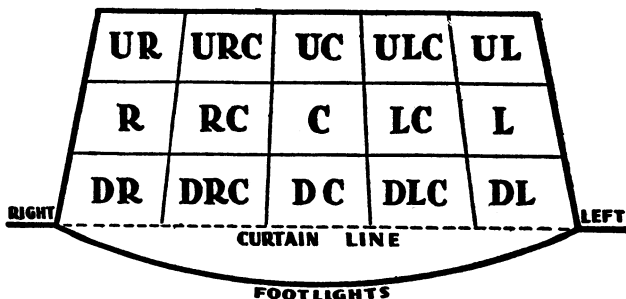
tory in manner to her niece, determined that she shall wear the slipper by whatever means may be necessary.

MILDRED: She is about seventeen. She wears a dark silk dress or suit and seems rather in awe of her dictatorial aunt.

HUGH SACONY: Clear enunciation is the first requisite. To this he may add an individual broadcasting style, speaking in a rapid staccato, but sometimes lowering his voice to a hushed tone, as in reporting from the ballroom. Since he must transmit emotion, it is important that he seem to share it and be capable of giving clear facial reaction to the various items he reports. He may wear a business-type suit. He wears a head-set phone to receive messages, and carries a microphone.

JIM CARVEN: The same requirements apply to him as to enunciation, reaction, etc. However, in other respects, he should contrast with Hugh Sacony as far as possible, as to age, style of speaking and mannerisms.

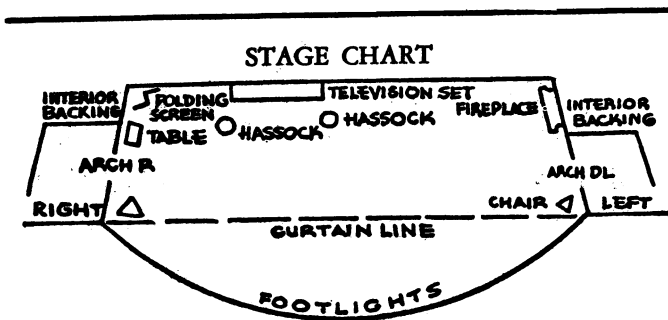
CHART OF STAGE POSITIONS



STAGE POSITIONS

Upstage means away from the footlights, *downstage* means toward the footlights, and *right* and *left* are used with reference to the actor as he faces the audience. R means *right*, L means *left*, U means *up*, D means *down*, C means *center*, and these abbreviations are used in combination, as: U R for *up right*, R C for *right center*, D L C for *down left center*, etc. One will note that a position designated on the stage refers to a general territory, rather than to a given point.

NOTE: Before starting rehearsals, chalk off your stage or rehearsal space as indicated above in the *Chart of Stage Positions*. Then teach your actors the meanings and positions of these fundamental terms of stage movement by having them walk from one position to another until they are familiar with them. The use of these abbreviated terms in directing the play saves time, speeds up rehearsals, and reduces the amount of explanation the director has to give to his actors.



PROPERTIES

GENERAL: Sofa and pillows; coffee table; end table by sofa; small table with drawer; two carved wooden armchairs with cushions; andirons by fireplace; decorative objects on mantel; framed mirror over mantel; bell pull; pictures, etc., as desired.

ACT ONE, SCENE ONE: Card table and chair; service for one person (silver, glass of water, napery) on card table; low silver bowl containing a few sprigs of birch leaves; box in drawer of table for Cinderella (for broken china).

ACT ONE, SCENE TWO: Flowers, four china figures (The Four Seasons, one on small pedestal), punch bowl and cups, all on table.

ACT TWO: Television set with "giant screen"; two hassocks; telephone on table by arch R; bowls of autumn leaves; gay sofa pillows replacing ones used previously; framed photograph on end table by sofa; low dish in front of photograph; painted folding screen; dish of chocolates on coffee table; white gloves and evening bag on end table by sofa.

ACT THREE: Remove leaves.

FLORA: Clean napkin; cup of soup on tray (parsley in soup); fish (cooked, ready to be served); entree (meat) and hot biscuits; dish of pudding; dish of mints and dish of salted nuts; mop, bucket, broom, cloths, can of wax and waxing pad, large box of detergent and other cleaning paraphernalia; length of ribbon; tray of tea and toast; tray of dishes; pair of old bedroom slippers (Lady Laughingtower's).

DIANA: Round jar of face cream, wrist watch, handkerchief, compact in evening bag, flower bowl and flowers.

LADY LAUGHINGTOWER: Tissue-wrapped antique china figure, handkerchief.

SIR JAMES: Newspaper, peppermint tablets in coat pocket, handkerchief, gloves and hat.

CINDERELLA: Handkerchief, dustcloth, miniature in small oval frame, sprigs of birch leaves, large pumpkin, trap presumably containing seven mice, box presumably containing six lizards.

HUMPLEBY: Smelling salts in pocket; dish of petit fours; mop, bucket, dustcloths, cans of polish, old newspapers and other cleaning paraphernalia; newly pressed gauzy scarf; tray of dishes; tray of glasses.

PAMELA: Package, wrist watch, evening bag, place cards, pen and seating plan.

DAME EVA: Wand.

DAME LILITH: Ebony cane, glass slipper, diamond clip.

BILL: Wrist watch.

HUGH SACONY: Head-set and microphone.

LADY CARPORT: Memorandum book in handbag.

JIM CARVEN: Head-set and microphone.

HERALD: Casket containing glass slipper, velvet cushion.

GIRL SELLING FACE CREAM: Jar of face cream.

GIRL SELLING SILVER PLATING: Piece of silverware.

PRODUCTION NOTES

"Diamond glitter" such as is sold in shops specializing in Christmas decorations for sprinkling on trees, etc., will add brilliance to Dame Eva's wand and slippers.

A band of reflector tape, wrapped around the base of Dame Lilith's cane, will add to the effectiveness of her incantations with the cane. It may be put on just before she goes on in Act Two and be slipped off thereafter.

Plastic slippers will solve the problem of "glass" slippers. Otherwise, silver slippers liberally sprinkled with glitter will do. For the "antique" figures, use small china figures from a variety store. It is desirable to buy five. Break one of these and glue it lightly together so that it can be depended on to break

when Humpleby lets it fall. The extra figure then may be used on the table as the "mended" figure.

At various places in the play there is reference to specific details of costume: e.g., "cloth of silver" and "matching pastel dresses." When the lines do not fit the actual costumes to be used, the lines should be changed to conform with the costumes.

In the incantation scene in which Cinderella's dress is transformed, the length of the incantation should be timed accurately to be no longer than is required for Cinderella to change slippers, drop her black work dress, and for an assistant to slip the ball gown over her head and fasten it and make any essential final adjustments.

The television set used in Acts Two and Three requires a "giant screen." This consists of a wooden frame, like a picture frame, with pieces of black cardboard inserted to mark off the "screen" area. Theatrical gauze may be tacked to the frame to give the effect of a transmitted scene. There may be a "remote control" which the characters use to turn the television "on" and "off." This requires an extension cord and bulb to light up the screen.

Different backgrounds that are occasionally required as the broadcasters move from one locale to another may be provided by using large painted cardboards as background for the broadcaster. These cards should not strive for detail but use a large, free stroke to suggest gilt and turquoise (for the ballroom), spirals of steam (for the kitchen), a pale green card with a swag of roses looped across it (for the Banquet Hall), a plain pink background (for the face-cream advertisement), a plain black or silver background (for the replating advertisement), a series of banners or series of torches (for the castle entrance). An assistant may remove the successive cards as required for change of scene. Or, if preferred, a plain background may be used.

Nothing adds more to the polish of a production than the quick picking up of cues. Unless there is a definite reason for a pause, train your actors to come in with their speeches "on

the heels," so to speak, of the preceding speeches. When a production lags, audience interest likewise will lag. It is always advisable during the last week of rehearsals to hold one or more sessions during which the actors merely sit around in a circle and go through lines only, with the express purpose of snapping up cues.

ACT ONE

Scene One

SCENE: *The living room of Wilfer Old Hall, in England. The hour is late afternoon, spring. A large arch in the R wall opens into the front hall and main entrance as well as to stairs to the upper part of the house. A smaller arch D L leads to other rooms in the lower part of the house. Upstage of the arch D L is a stone fireplace with brass andirons. On the mantel above the fireplace are several decorative objects and over the mantel, a large framed mirror. There is a sofa at L C, facing the audience. A line of pillows, stiff as palace guards, is arranged along the back. In front of the sofa is a coffee table and right of it, an end table. Upstage of the arch R is a small table with a drawer. There are two impressive-looking carved wooden armchairs with cushions, one D L, downstage of the arch and against the wall, the other in a similar position D R. On the wall upstage of the arch D L is a tapestry bell pull. A few pictures and other furnishing can be used as the size of the stage permits, but the general atmosphere of the room is stiff and gloomy.]*

AT RISE OF CURTAIN: *FLORA, a pretty young maid in a neat uniform with spotless cap and apron, is at a small card table that has been set up at R C, facing the audience. Upstage of the table is a single chair. The table itself has been carefully laid for one person to dine. It sparkles with polish, shining silver, glass and lustrous white napery. On it also is a low silver bowl containing a few sprigs of birch leaves. FLORA, standing above the table, is checking herself as the curtain rises.]*

FLORA. Knife right. Soup spoon here. Fork left. Napkin left. Glass at tip of knife. Ends all even. [*Slides hand along*]

bottoms of cutlery, assuring herself they're accurately lined up.] There! [*Steps back and surveys effect proudly.*]

[CINDERELLA enters D L. *She carries a large dustcloth. She is extremely pretty but she has done everything possible to conceal the fact. Her golden hair is hidden by a dustcap or kerchief; she wears a limp, patched, black house dress and has a smudge of dust on her cheek.*]

CINDERELLA [*coming left of card table*]. Finished laying the table?

FLORA. Yes'm. I think it's perfect *this* time.

CINDERELLA. We'll see. [*Moves behind table and looks critically at setting. She makes a tiny adjustment of bowl of greenery; reluctantly.*] Well, it *seems* to be all right. [*Picks up napkin, looks at it on both sides, then unfolds it and inspects it more critically; pounces.*] Really, Flora!

FLORA. Oh, miss, something wrong?

CINDERELLA [*pointing dramatically*]. There!

FLORA [*looking*]. I don't see nothing, miss.

CINDERELLA. Right there—by my finger.

FLORA. Well, yes, there is a tiny fleck of red. But you can hardly see it.

CINDERELLA [*the too-patient voice*]. Flora, try to remember, a *gentlewoman's* table linen is *always* immaculate.

FLORA [*crushed*]. Yes'm.

CINDERELLA [*still fussing at napkin, rubbing spot vigorously*]. I don't see how it got there. The napkin *seems* to have been washed clean except for that.

FLORA. It might be from Lady Laughingtower's lipstick. It's hard to get them marks off linen, no matter how you rub.

CINDERELLA. I expect that's it. Imagine using lipstick at her age! Why, she must be almost forty. Well, take it away and bring a clean napkin. [*FLORA takes napkin and goes out D L. CINDERELLA turns her attention to her dusting. She crosses to end table right of sofa and polishes top vigorously.*]

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[FLORA enters D L with a clean napkin, which she carefully places, again lining it up anxiously. The doorbell rings off R.]

FLORA. All right to answer it? [Displays clean apron.]

CINDERELLA [*hesitantly*]. Yes, I suppose so— Oh, Flora, your hair!

FLORA [*smoothing it down with anxious hands*]. I'm sorry, miss. I brushed it hard with a wet brush. It does creep out so!

CINDERELLA. It's all curls. [*Struck by an awful thought.*]

Flora, you haven't *done* anything to your hair, have you?

FLORA. Done anything? No'm—just brushed it and pulled it back hard like you said.

CINDERELLA [*moving toward her*]. I mean, you wouldn't have had—a—permanent, would you?

FLORA. Oh, no, ma'am! The trouble is—it's naturally curly.

CINDERELLA. So unsuitable for a servant. [*Sighs.*] Well, try to look as presentable as you can. [*Doorbell rings again.*]

You may answer the door.

FLORA [*hesitating*]. If it's callers, ma'am, should I show them into the morning room?

CINDERELLA. Into the morning room—why?

FLORA. I just thought you might want to change.

CINDERELLA. Certainly not. I'm not ashamed of the work I do for my father. You can show them directly in here.

FLORA. Very well, ma'am. [FLORA goes out R. CINDERELLA crosses back to end table and continues to dust.]

[FLORA ushers in LILY LADY LAUGHTINGTOWER and her daughters PAMELA and DIANA. All three carry packages.]

CINDERELLA [*coming forward, speaking without warmth*]. A pleasant surprise, Lady Laughingtower—Pamela—Diana. [*Dismisses FLORA with a slight gesture. FLORA goes out D L.*]

LADY LAUGHTINGTOWER. My sweet child! [*Kisses CINDERELLA lightly on cheek.*] It's hardly fair of us to drop in on

you like this . . . but being right next door—at St. Andrew's Rummage Sale . . .

CINDERELLA. I'm so glad you did. Won't you sit down?

LADY LAUGHTOWER [*sitting on right end of sofa*]. My poor feet! [*Slips off pump and rubs foot. DIANA sits in chair D R, PAMELA in chair D L. CINDERELLA stands stiffly at C stage.*]

CINDERELLA [*looking pointedly at her unshod foot*]. Would you like to rest—in the bedroom?

LADY LAUGHTOWER. No, thank you, that isn't necessary. [*Slips pump back on her foot.*]

DIANA. We very nearly screamed "Merry Christmas" as we came in.

PAMELA. We've brought presents.

CINDERELLA. Presents?

PAMELA. Fun presents. Remember those slogans from the last election? [*Burlesques a political speaker.*] "Dare to be a woman!"

DIANA [*chiming in*]. "Vote for National Skin Food!"

PAMELA. "After Housework, Socialize Your Complexion!"

Well, I suddenly thought about you and all the work you do and we went straightaway to the Ministry of Physical Culture Beauty Parlor—

DIANA [*holding up a round jar*]. And got three pots of Welfare Face Cream.

PAMELA [*cutting in*]. We said we had a sick friend who couldn't come down herself.

DIANA [*crossing C, presenting it*]. This one's for you. But you must lie down a whole morning and pat it into your skin gently with just your fingertips.

CINDERELLA [*stiffly returning jar*]. I am afraid I can't accept it. It's impossible for me to spare half a day. [*DIANA shrugs and returns to her chair D R.*]

LADY LAUGHTOWER [*heartily*]. Come now, a half day in bed'll do wonders for you. I can give you the phone number of an excellent charwoman who'll be delighted to get a half day o' work.

CINDERELLA. Thank you, no.

DIANA. Show her what *you* found, Mama, at the rummage.

PAMELA. It's for Sir James.

CINDERELLA [*not quite liking this*]. For my daddy?

LADY LAUGHTOWER. Just something I happened to notice.

The minute I laid eyes on it, I said to myself: That's the very piece Sir James is always hoping to find.

CINDERELLA [*plaintively*]. Oh! Please—not more old china for me to wash!

DIANA. But it's the most beautiful piece of Meissen! Purely lovely!

PAMELA. Such luck, too! We're almost certain it's the one he lacks to make up his set.

CINDERELLA. You mean—[*Sighs.*—that incomplete set of The Four Seasons he's always mooning about?

PAMELA. That's it! Only thing, none of us were sure just which season was lacking.

DIANA. Mama bought it, anyway.

LADY LAUGHTOWER. There was no time to lose. I saw Lord Scone coming. He's always hunting pieces for *his* collection. I knew he'd buy it like a flash. Just look! [*Unwraps tissue paper from package she carries and shows an antique china figure.*] This is either Spring or Summer, I'll be bound, for she has flowers in her arms.

CINDERELLA [*politely*]. I'm sure Father will be most grateful.

LADY LAUGHTOWER [*rising*]. Well now, my dears, we must run along. [*PAMELA and DIANA rise.*]

PAMELA [*crossing to CINDERELLA*]. One thing more; we've a group coming over Friday evening. Rella, dear, could you join us?

CINDERELLA. I'm afraid——

DIANA [*moving to CINDERELLA*]. Just a small group. We're going to dance and play records——

LADY LAUGHTOWER. Diana has a very special young man coming. [*Places figure on coffee table.*]

DIANA. Really a pet, in spite of his being an atomic scientist

and so terrifically smart. I thought I'd ask him to bring a friend for you, Rella.

CINDERELLA. No, I'm sorry. I have no clothes to wear, and if I did, I could hardly leave Father.

LADY LAUGHTINGTOWER [*glancing about*]. Actually, this place needs a few labor-saving devices. If electricity were put in, you would have all sorts of conveniences. [*Kindly.*] A beautiful young girl like you should have some fun in life.

CINDERELLA [*coldly, moving D L*]. It's very kind of you to interest yourself in our affairs, but really, Daddy and I prefer to keep things as they were when Mummy was with us.

LADY LAUGHTINGTOWER [*comfortably*]. Well, yes, one does feel that way—for awhile. Come, girls, it's really late. [*CINDERELLA pulls bell downstage of fireplace, then moves to left end of sofa.*]

[*FLORA comes in D L.*]

CINDERELLA. Please show the ladies out.

FLORA. Yes, ma'am. [*LADY LAUGHTINGTOWER, PAMELA and DIANA are ushered out R by FLORA, amid general "good-bys."* CINDERELLA crosses to coffee table, where Lady Laughingtower has placed figure. She stands looking down at it, slowly turning it around and around.]

[*FLORA re-enters R, notices CINDERELLA'S preoccupation, hesitates and then goes out D L without speaking.*]

CINDERELLA [*to herself*]. Actually, it would be too absurd. They're both of them much too old. I'm just imagining things. [*Starts briskly dusting fireplace mantel.*]

[*SIR JAMES enters R, his newspaper under his arm.*]

SIR JAMES. Still working, daughter? [*Pauses R.*]

CINDERELLA. Daddy! [*Crosses and receives a light kiss on cheek.*]

SIR JAMES. Isn't it a little late to be dusting?

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CINDERELLA. I get up at six-thirty and work as fast as I can.
[*She noticeably speaks with more whine when talking to her father.*] It's a big house.

SIR JAMES [*moving toward sofa*]. If you'd only let me get in more help—

CINDERELLA. But, Daddy, we can't afford to hire really good help. [*Comes c.*] Remember how Mummy always said: "It's only by constant drudgery we can have things as other people do."

SIR JAMES. I remember. But sometimes it seems as if people with much less income live better than we do. [*Sits on sofa and opens newspaper.*]

CINDERELLA [*touching her eyes delicately with a dainty handkerchief*]. I try to keep things as darling Mummy wanted them to be.

SIR JAMES [*baffled*]. But this constant dusting—and you've even laid the table in here. What's wrong with the dining room?

CINDERELLA [*quiver beginning to creep into her voice*]. I'm sorry, Daddy. Truly, I'm sorry. You know those terrible scratches you got on the table the night you showed off your antique china collection to the Scones? Well—I've been sanding the table top.

SIR JAMES. Sanding it!

CINDERELLA. To refinish it. The finish has to be removed very carefully, using the finest sandpaper. It's slow work and I wasn't able to finish, and the dust from the sanding simply settled over everything in the house.

SIR JAMES. But, my darling—*refinishing!* That's a job for an expert—with power tools.

CINDERELLA [*moving behind sofa, leaning over his shoulder*]. Daddy! You can't mean you'd let a mere workman touch Mummy's table!

SIR JAMES. Well—still—— [*Gives up, slams down newspaper and rises.*] So we eat in here. [*Moves above card table.*]
But you've only laid one place.

CINDERELLA [*with a patient smile*]. Forgive me, Daddy, dear.

Food really disagrees with me when I'm a teensy bit tired.
 [*Moves toward him.*] But I'll stay and keep you company while I finish dusting.

SIR JAMES [*sighing*]. Ah, you're your mother's own daughter.

CINDERELLA [*fondly*]. Mummy was always dusting!

SIR JAMES [*touch of grimness*]. That's how I remember her, too.

CINDERELLA [*moving D L*]. I'll just ring for Flora to serve your dinner. It's been ready—the last half hour. [*Pulls bell cord.*]

SIR JAMES [*sitting upstage of card table*]. And I'm ready for it. Scone wanted me to join him at the club. It's the roast beef dinner tonight—I just wasn't quite certain how you'd take it.

CINDERELLA [*all martyr, coming in front of sofa*]. Daddy, you know nothing matters to me but your happiness!

SIR JAMES. I do know that, dear. But I can't forget what happened the last time I stayed at the club. Remember?

CINDERELLA. It was only the rain and the dark suddenly made me so lonely for Mummy!

SIR JAMES. But to run out in the rain and lie on that cold gravestone! [*Shudders as he unfolds his napkin.*] Soaking wet when I found you at last. You might even have caught pneumonia!

CINDERELLA [*archly, picking up his newspaper, crossing to card table*]. But instead it was *you* got sick, Daddy. After all the fuss you made over me. [*Laughs lightly.*] *You* were sick with a cold for a week! [*Puts newspaper down by his place.*]

[FLORA enters D L.]

FLORA [*pausing D L*]. You rang, ma'am?

CINDERELLA. You may serve dinner now.

FLORA. Yes'm. [*Goes out D L.*]

SIR JAMES [*picking up his newspaper*]. I see the Food Ministry is in hot water again! Just what I predicted.

CINDERELLA [*snapping her dustcloth as she moves to table*]

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upstage of arch R]. That reminds me, I've found a chain store. The food is much cheaper. [*Dusts table.*]

SIR JAMES. In this neighborhood? [*Sneezes.*]

CINDERELLA. Well, it's not near. [*Brightly.*] I just get up earlier.

[*FLORA enters D L with a cup of soup on a tray and starts to serve it.*]

CINDERELLA. Flora, please!

FLORA. Oh, yes, ma'am. Excuse me, I forgot. [*Brings soup to CINDERELLA for inspection.*]

CINDERELLA [*gently stern*]. What else did you forget, Flora?

FLORA [*checking anxiously*]. Soup hot. Biscuits hot. No splashing.

CINDERELLA. What was it I chopped and put in the little covered dish?

FLORA. Oh, ma'am, of course! I was to float a bit of parsley on the soup. I'll fix it straightaway.

CINDERELLA. Try to remember next time.

FLORA [*going D L*]. I will, ma'am.

SIR JAMES. Couldn't I just have the soup as it is? [*FLORA hesitates and looks at CINDERELLA.*]

CINDERELLA [*motioning her out, as she moves right of card table*]. Father, dear, please. [*FLORA goes out D L.*] If I must train inexperienced help, please, *please* don't interfere.

SIR JAMES. I only thought the soup was here and hot—it isn't too tasty at best.

CINDERELLA. Father, I do my best to keep down expense, and now solely to please you, we have the wages of an incompetent maid and the expense of her food! Don't judge the latter by the little I eat. I assure you, Flora has a very hearty appetite.

[*FLORA re-enters D L, and presents the tray for CINDERELLA'S approval. She nods and FLORA places the soup before SIR JAMES.*]

CINDERELLA. You can serve the fish.

FLORA. Yes'm. [*Goes out D L. SIR JAMES skims out parsley with his spoon and places it in soup plate. Then he tastes soup and puts down his spoon in annoyance.*]

SIR JAMES. Uh!

CINDERELLA [*not noticing particularly; busily tidying up table by arch R*]. I hope the soup's not too hot, Daddy, dear.

SIR JAMES. It's stone—— [*Glances at her, decides to say nothing, takes up soup and hastily gulps it down, making a wry face at taste.*]

CINDERELLA [*snapping her dustcloth smartly*]. What did you say?

SIR JAMES. I said it's fine. [*Sneezes.*] Can't expect Flora to become a good cook right away.

CINDERELLA. I *don't* expect her to. [*Now on her knees, dusting legs of large chair D R.*] That's why I do the cooking myself.

[*FLORA enters D L with the fish. She brings it to CINDERELLA, who inspects it, still on her knees, and nods approval. FLORA removes the soup and serves the fish.*]

CINDERELLA. You can serve the entree a little later.

FLORA. Yes'm. [*Goes out D L.*]

SIR JAMES [*struggling unsuccessfully with dried-out fish*]. I thought I saw Lady Laughingtower's car pull away as I drove up.

CINDERELLA [*rising from her knees*]. She was here with Pamela and Diana. . . . Really, not one of the three has an idea in her head.

SIR JAMES [*still struggling with fish*]. They always seem so happy. [*Worries a bit of fish loose and chews it vigorously, at last washing it down with a sip of water.*]

CINDERELLA [*coming right of SIR JAMES*]. I should say they lead completely selfish lives. [*Snaps dustcloth vigorously.*]

[*FLORA enters D L with the entree and some hot biscuits. She submits it to CINDERELLA for inspection. It is approved. When she goes to remove the fish, she hesitates when she sees most of it uneaten.*]

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FLORA. You haven't finished, sir.

SIR JAMES [*in a murmur*]. Take it away. Take it, do! [FLORA removes fish and replaces it with meat course.]

CINDERELLA. You can serve the sweet a little later.

FLORA. Yes'm. [*Goes out D L.*]

SIR JAMES [*having tasted beef, poking at it dubiously*]. What is this?

CINDERELLA [*gratified*]. I thought you'd notice the beef, Daddy. I made it rather special. [*Merrily, moving to coffee table, flicking dustcloth about.*] You wouldn't ever guess it was off the neck, now, would you?

SIR JAMES [*slumping*]. Matter of fact, I thought it was off the shank.

CINDERELLA [*triumphantly, turning to him*]. I knew I'd fool you! You see, first I tenderized it by pounding it well. Then I boiled it with bay leaves and basil. That's what gives it the unusual flavor.

SIR JAMES [*touched*]. You go to far too much trouble for me, Cinderella!

CINDERELLA. Oh, I haven't nearly the time to give to the cooking I'd like to. But I did think this was rather special. Quite original and different. [*Crosses to chair D L, on her knees, attacking chair legs.*]

SIR JAMES. But I want you to have fun like Pamela and Diana. Seems to me they're always playing records or watching television or off to a dance——

CINDERELLA [*flipping dustcloth*]. A big house like this doesn't do itself, Daddy! Why, take today, I haven't black-leaded the grates yet and the lamps are still to clean.

SIR JAMES. That reminds me—— I've arranged to have electric lights put in this winter. It'll give you more leisure.

CINDERELLA [*jumping up*]. No, Father! You must cancel the order! [*Crossing to him.*] If you don't, I shall run away! Think of the dust it will make when it is put in! [*Snaps dustcloth.*]

SIR JAMES [*sneezing*]. For a week or so, yes. But then the