

A Fairy Tale

chris wind

chriswind3@gmail.com

www.chriswind.net

Cinderella: stereotype bag lady (complete with decked-out grocery cart, baggy coat, dress, sweaters, panty hose rolled down to men's shoes or rubber boots--or one of each--a real Sally Ann Special)

Snow White: stereotype prostitute, black if possible (jewellery, shoulder bag, short tight skirt, perhaps a fur jacket, high heels)

Gretel: stereotype militant-dyke (short hair, t-shirt and jacket, khaki pants with lots of pockets, boots)

Catherine: stereotype R.E.A.L. woman (a Simpsons Special--definitely with matching shoes and purse)

Scene 1

A streetcorner, in Toronto, at night. With a City of Toronto garbage bin, and perhaps street signs or a streetlight post. Storefront in background, with a step to door set back about four feet.

Cinderella enters, slowly, with great effort or great care. it's unclear which. She looks the place over, probes and picks here and there ('here and there' must include the garbage bin), obviously establishing a new 'residence;. Finally 'satisfied', she lowers herself to sit in the doorway. Some time is to be taken with all of this. (and much ad libbing is encouraged)

Snow White enters, with casual and confident routine. Her glance is toward the street/audience. Then she notices Cinderella and looks her up and down.

SW: Mm-mm. (walks back and forth in front of her, then comes to a stop, hands on hips) And who the hell are you?

C: (after a pause, during which she focuses on SW) Cinderella.

SW: (bursts out laughing) Yeah, well you look more like the wicked witch from the North. (continues laughing, now at her own joke; strolls up and down a bit--partly watching C, partly watching the cars); eventually she pauses, realising that C has not even smiled, realizing that C is serious). You really mean it, don't you? (SW changes her tone, now treating her like an escapee from Queen Street) Okay sugar. That's fine. You're Cinderella. That's okay. (SW then goes to stand by the streetlight, and watches the cars going by.)

C: (calling out to SW--somewhat timid, somewhat cranky, somewhat tough) This is my corner.

SW: (slowly turns back toward C, as if she can't believe her nerve; then after a pause she responds, with much indignation) The hell it is.

C: (insistent) I was here first.

SW: You mean, this is the first time you was here. And it's gonna be the last you hear, now get on away from my face, you're bad for business. (C doesn't move.) Look lady, Cinderella, or whoever the hell you are, why can't you just go find another corner?

C: Cuz. I can't, not tonight, not with this foot. (with difficulty, she lifts up one foot--old, swollen, and quite attractively adorned as described earlier)

SW: Your feet--(she cuts off, partly in empathy for sore feet, but more for the look on C's face when she says 'this foot'; SW walks over closer to her) You really are Cinderella, aren't you? (C looks back at her as if to say 'that's what I said ten minutes ago'.) Well how come you're here? I mean what brings you to be sittin with alla your stuff here on a streetcorner, at midnight? (She sits beside C.)

C: Well, I woke up one morning and the glass slipper didn't fit. (prefaced or perhaps interspersed with some unconscious lip smacking)

SW: (looks at her swollen ankles) You got pregnant?

C: (considers) Well that too I guess. Yeah I guess that was the beginning. No, I meant I got old. You know, wrinkles, sags, swollen feet--

SW: So?

C: Well, you can't be old and be Cinderella too.

SW: *You* are.

C: (considers) Yeah, I guess I am. But the prince didn't like it much.

SW: Fuck the prince! (C gives her a look that says a thousand words; SW continues) Didn't he get old too?

C: Sure he did. Bald and paunchy just like the rest of em. But y'know as they say, years look better on men--

SW: (sarcastic, implying quite the contrary, speaking from experience) They say.

C: (continues) And he had money, so he soon got himself another pretty young thing. Out with the old--

SW: No alimony?

C: Alimony? We're not divorced. (she goes on before SW asks the question) First it was the children and then I figured why bother--most don't pay alimony even with a court order.

SW: This way you figured on at least part of the pension, right?

C: Well as it turns out, I wasn't entitled to any of his private pension, and 'women who work in the home' get only a part of the other. (pause) And for that part, you have to have, well, see (she gestures to her cart and the corner), I have--

SW: --no fixed address. Tell me about it. (SW gets up then, lingers up and down the curb a bit.)

C: So who are you?

SW: Me? (she chuckles) Snow White.

C: (a pause; she is confused) But--

SW: Don't you too give me that shit. The story goes she was "as white as the snow, as red as the blood, and as black as the ebony window frame". It doesn't say what was white, and what was black. Well my skin sure is black and my teeth, ain't they white as snow? (C looks in question for 'the red'; SW smiles) And I don't need to tell you what part of me is red. On the streets they call me Rosebud.

C: (after recovering from a bit of embarrassment) Wasn't that Sleeping Beauty's other name?

SW: Was it? Well that doesn't surprise me, we got a lot in common, her and me. (She stops her pacing, seeing someone on the next block.) Uh-oh lookee here who's comin--Prince Charming in a uniform.

(blackout)

Scene 2

A holding cell. with two long benches. C (without her cart) and SW are 'inside'.

C: What good luck, eh? (She walks around, inspecting the corners of the cell.)

SW: *Good* luck? (She stands by the door looking out.)

C: Well I'd rather sleep here than in that doorway. Course to you--you probably got a nice warm apartment somewhere--

SW: (sarcastic) Yeah somewhere in Rosedale.

C: (stops her fussing) I'm sorry. Where *do* you live? (She sits on one of the benches, prepared to listen.)

SW: (still angry) In the middle of a fucking forest with 17,000 dwarfs. (relenting) I'm sorry. I live in a room near Moss Park.

C: Well come on, we got some time to kill here you and me, fill in the blanks for me. (She starts rummaging in her coat pockets.)

SW: Well, I got tired of being in the service of men. (smiles wryly)

C: So?

SW: Well that's why I did it.

C: Did what?

SW: Ate the apple!

C: (pausing to understand) You mean you *knew* it was poisoned?

SW: Why does everyone take me for an idiot? Of course I knew it was poisoned!

C: Okay, okay. (She pulls out two squished chocolate bars and begins to pick the lint off of them.) And then the Prince Charming came along just in time and saved you--and then--

SW: No you got that wrong too.

C: Well don't get mad at me--I'm just tellin it like it was in the book--

SW: Yeah well whenever do men write the truth about women?

C: You got a point there. (She offers SW a chocolate bar; SW takes it after a slight hesitation; they both unwrap and begin eating) Okay so Prince Charming didn't save you--

SW: Hell no, he arrested me--for soliciting.

C: (confused again) No, that was tonight--I meant back in the forest--the real forest--I mean, the

other forest--

SW: That's what I'm talking about. He was an undercover zit. Everybody thinks me and Sleeping Beauty got saved by these Prince Charming guys. Well they didn't save us at all. In fact them *being* there at all was just bad luck, coincidental timing. We both came to quite without their help. Her hundred years were up and the piece of apple fell out of my mouth.

C: But what about 'the undercover zit'? (she likes the phrase)

SW: Well, they said we were soliciting--being provocative, lying there like that, all beautiful-- just waiting, teasing, seducing, inviting--

C: But you were just lying there!

SW: Yeah that's what we told them too. Seems if you're a woman, you don't have to *do* anything to be guilty. And then, since we both *did* take their hands, well that clinched it. That's how Sleeping Beauty and me met. We both got taken to the same station.

C: And then? I mean after?

SW: Well it's not easy to get a job, period. and with a record, well it's damn near impossible. And hell, all my job experience was in the 'sexual services' field, so--

C: So here you are.

SW: Here *we* are.

C: Yeah.

(blackout)

Scene 3

Very dark. Faint outlines of an office of sorts. Gretel is sitting at a desk, her back to the audience, working furtively at a computer terminal. The terminal screen and perhaps a flashlight sitting on the desk are the only sources of light. She may be scribbling information from the screen onto some paper. She mutters under her breath from time to time--"Come on, come on", "fuck", "yes!", "shit!", etc. Suddenly bright lights go on. She freezes, then slowly raises her hands.

(blackout)

Scene 4

The holding cell. G has just joined C and SW.

C: Hi. (She begins to manage in her coat.)

G: (after a pause, as if to decide whether or not to be sociable) Hi.

C: (grinning, as if she can hardly wait to tell) I'm Cinderella. And this here is Snow White. (G

smiles, incredulously) So who are you?

G: Gretel!

SW: You're kidding.

G: No! (pause, digesting) What are *you* two doing here?

SW: Well I'm here for soliciting.

C: Vagrancy. (She offers a relatively clean chocolate bar.) You?

G: Uh--nothing much.

SW: Come on--out with it.

G: B and E. and (adding the more serious crime as if *it* was the extra), I broke the security code on their computer system, accessed some information they didn't want accessed.

C: They?

G: Litton Industries.

SW: (impressed) Hm. Haven't *you* come a long way from tossing witches into the oven.

G: (soberly) Unfortunately not. (pause) I understood then what I understand now. And it's just

two things.

C: Go on.

G: One, if you want something done, you've got to do it yourself. See, that's an advantage women have over men. We *know* that. Men don't. They're so used to having things done for them, that they've gotten in the habit of ordering others to do them. And see the reason is simple. (warming up) They've never really *had* to *do* anything. Being male has been enough all their lives. A man gets to where he is just by *being* a man, just because of what he *is*. But a woman gets to where she gets to by *doing* things, it's because of what she *does*.

SW: Y'know you're right. Most men are hopelessly insecure.

G: Precisely! Because they've never been rewarded for their abilities, only for their dick. So they're incredibly uncertain about their own self-worth.

C: So they need cheerleaders--wives.

G: And they run around all their lives asserting themselves.

SW: (after a pause) So what's the second thing?

G: To prevent drastic consequences, you've got to take drastic actions.

SW: (after another pause) Ain't that the truth.

(blackout)

Scene 5

A doctor's office. Catherine is lying on an examining table, her feet in stirrups, sheet covering her from the waist down. Suddenly there is a lot of noise in an adjoining office, she half sits up on her elbow, looking around, and crying out thing like "What's happening? What--oh my God--" as the lights go out.

(blackout)

Scene 6

The holding cell. Catherine has just joined C, SW, and G.

C: Hi--come on in. (She is pleased at having so much company; begins to rummage in her coat...)

CA: (shyly) Hello. (She goes to sit on a bench in the corner; she is very upset.)

SW: So who are you? (All wait eagerly.)

CA: (in a small voice) Catherine.

(C, SW, and G look at each other.)

SW: Honey, are you sure you're in the right place?

CA: Yes--I mean no. Yes.

SW: But look, what we got here is a Snow White (gesturing), a Cinderella, a Gretel, and (flatly)
a Catherine.

CA: So?

SW: Well you don't belong here, Sugar, ain't that clear?

CA: I do so belong here. Just because no one knows my name doesn't mean I don't belong here.

C: Well dear (she hands her a chocolate bar), it's just that we don't remember a Catherine.

CA: Of course you don't remember a Catherine. My name wasn't even mentioned in the story.
I'm like a Mrs. John Brown. a no-name.

C: (confused) I don't remember a John Brown either, do you? (asking SW)

CA: No--no--but you do remember a Rumpelstiltskin, don't you! *His* name was mentioned. *His*
name was important. very important.

G: Ah--you're the girl who--

SW: --had to turn straw into gold--

C: --every night more and more--

G: on pain of death.

C: And Rumpelstiltskin saved you!

(CA raises an eyebrow at the word 'save'.)

G: (bitterly) He blackmailed her. She had no alternative.

SW: To save her own life, she had to give up her child.

C: But you didn't--you found out his name and the deal was off!

G: (after a pause) What are you here for?

CA: I was at Morgentaler's clinic--it was just raided.

SW: What were you doing at Morgentaler's clinic?

CA: Getting an abortion! (pause) I didn't live happily ever after! My little boy--the one that Rumpelstiltskin almost got--well he died when he was still a baby--crib death. And after that I kept having baby girls. Sweet darling little girls. (unable to go on; SW goes over to sit beside her on the bench and puts her arm around her; C begins to rummage for another

chocolate bar)

SW: And--

CA: The King kept killing them. He wanted a boy. Someone to inherit the throne, his precious kingdom--

C: So he killed your little girl babies?

G: (flatly) It happens all the time.

CA: Eventually I found a way to give them away--one of the ladies in waiting, and the midwife--

SW: And now--

CA: Now I can't stand it anymore. The last one almost killed me. Physically and emotionally. I'm nothing but an incubator to the King. And I've tried so hard. (gives in to the sobbing) I'm just sick and tired of it all. I'm tired of not being taken seriously. Whether I was to keep my little boy or not was decided by a guessing game. A stupid guessing game! And I'm tired of not being listened to. I told the King my father lied, I told him I couldn't spin gold out of straw. But he didn't believe me. No, he believes an immature, egotistic vain drunkard before he believes a woman.

C: (soothing) It's okay dear, we're listening to you.

SW: We believe you.

G: And we take you seriously. What else happened?

(blackout)

Scene 7

The holding cell. as before. C, SW, G, and CA.

G: So has anyone thought about how we're going to get out of here?

CA: I don't think the King--. Snow White, don't you have prior arrangements for this sort of thing?

SW: (glaring) You mean a pimp? (CA cowers; SW eases off) No, honey, I'm an independent, kind of--and I think our collective's bail fund is empty. We used the last of it for Little Red Riding Hood--she got beaten up pretty bad last week. Cinderella, what about your sisters?

C: Oh I don't think my sisters would even talk to me now--and with good reason. I was pretty stupid then, young, vain, smug about my Prince Charming--. Gretel?

G: The buck stops here--with us. *All* of us. (after a long pause, all ad lib wandering and thinking) Catherine, do you have some lipstick? and mascara?

CA: Sure. (She rummages in her purse.)

G: (she gets out some matches from one of her pant pockets) And we need something to put them in--I don't suppose anyone has a pot-- (C digs into the lining of her baggy coat and produces a pot, with a toothless grin) --a knife? (G smiles, realizing the common denominator of resourcefulness) --they took mine-- (C produces a knife; G empties the mascara into the pot then begins shaving the lipstick into the pot as well)

CA: What are you doing?

G: Well, if we can heat this enough, the chemicals will mix and then--don't you know what they put in this stuff? (she looks at SW) Do you have any birth control pills?

SW: Of course. (She produces an entire package.)

G: Priceless. These things are so potent. (She empties the package into the pot and lights a match under it.)

C: How about a chocolate bar? (She begins rummaging, eagerly.)

G: (smiling) No--thanks.

SW: Here--this'll work better. (She offers a lighter.)

G: Great.

(They all hunch over the pot in the center of the cell, like four witches around a cauldron.)

CA: So what happens when it's all melted?

G: Well the chemical reaction of the acetates, nitrate, titanium dioxide, propylene glycol, and mestranol will be strong enough--(she walks to the cell door)--we'll just pour it into the lock here--and it'll dissolve the tumblers. (there is a hissing sound)

CA: Wow.

G: (she opens the door) Let's go!

SW: Outa sight. Come on Cinderella, Catherine--

(Cinderella hobbles out--after wiping the pot clean and tucking it back into her coat.)

CA: We're free!

SW: (on her way out, a bit sarcastically) To live happily ever after?

G: (after a pause, and from offstage) Well, we're working on it.

C: (also from offstage) Ain't that the truth!

(blackout)