

# THE CINDERELLA CHRONICLES

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A one-act comedy by  
Susan M. Steadman

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## CAST OF CHARACTERS

JENNY, a young American girl.

ALEX, her best friend.

ELLA, known as "Cinderella," a sensitive writer.

GERTRUDE, Cinderella's stepmother.

DESIREE, Cinderella's stepsister.

DEANNA, Cinderella's other stepsister.

ANIMALS, number and kind to be determined by each production.

GODMOTHER, Ella's fairy godmother who has been abroad for 15 years.

BALL ATTENDANTS

QUEEN or KING

FROG PRINCE

## TIME

The present.

## PLACE

A museum of fairy tale lore in Europe.

## MUSIC

Music by Paige Steadman: music for the two songs that are part of the play will be provided to licensed producers and upon request as part of a perusal order.

## AUTHOR'S NOTES

The flexibility of this script opens it to use by casts of varying size. For a small group, Cinderella's stepsisters and stepmother may double as Cinderella's animal friends, and the Fairy Godmother may double as the Queen. If, in addition, the number of animals is reduced to three, the total number of performers would be eight. Other scenarios will work as well, such as having the animals double as ball participants, including the Queen/King. On the other hand, to accommodate more players, animals and ball participants may be increased in number.

The following is the breakdown along gender lines:

1 Male

FROG PRINCE

7 Females

ALEX

JENNY

CINDERELLA

GERTRUDE

DESIREE

DEANNA

GODMOTHER

0-10+ Either Male or Female

ANIMALS

BALL GUESTS

QUEEN/KING

The scene of Cinderella's playing with the animals may be staged as simply or elaborately as desired. The types and numbers of animals may be changed according to production needs.

A couple of the acting techniques designated in the script are based on the theatre games popularized by Viola Spolin in *Improvisation for the Theater* (1963) and elsewhere. For example, the "mirror dance" at the palace, requiring great concentration as partners reflect one another, may be created by the actors during rehearsal as part of the warm-up routine. The "clock machine" is based on Spolin's "Part of the Whole." For additional information, go to <http://www.spolin.com>.

The "stage picture" formed by the actors at the end of the play should reveal something about each character and yet create a unified and dramatic whole. A warm-up exercise that may prove useful is having the actors mill around, then blowing a whistle, ringing a bell or simply calling out "stop" (i.e., freeze), followed by "stage picture." Each actor immediately adjusts his or her position, and is not only responsible for being visible, at least in part, to the audience, but for ensuring that those behind him or her may be seen as well.

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*(Lights up on a museum's dusty room containing odd pieces of furniture and objects from various famous fairy tales. Two young girls, JENNY and ALEX, enter and cross to the door of the museum as they speak.)*

**JENNY:** Your parents were so sweet to let me come along with you on this vacation. I've never been further from home than Wisconsin. And that was just to visit relatives.

**ALEX:** It's not really a vacation, Jenny. And besides, Mom thought my best friend would keep me out of trouble.

**JENNY:** Are you sure it's all right for us to go inside?

**ALEX:** Well, it belongs to our family. That's why we came all the way to Europe. My parents have to figure out what to do with this museum. It was my great-grandmother's. And *her* mother's before her, and *her* mother's before her, and *her* mother's—

**JENNY:** I get the picture!

**ALEX:** Okay. I brought the key to the back door, so we don't have to break in.

**JENNY:** Alex, do you really think...

**ALEX:** Yes! Don't chicken out now!

*(They unlock the door and enter upstage.)*

**JENNY:** So, it's a museum of what...folk lore?

**ALEX:** Not so much folk lore as *fairy* lore...you know, fairy tales. But no one seems to be interested in the artifacts anymore, so it's just been sitting here for years and years and years and years and—

**JENNY:** I get the picture!

*(As they move around the space, Alex discovers Sleeping Beauty's spinning wheel.)*

**ALEX:** Ooh. Look, Jenny.

*(Jenny joins her and begins to poke the spinning wheel.)*

Careful! Don't prick your finger. You weigh too much for me to carry you back to the hotel.

**JENNY:** Very funny.

*(As Alex spins the wheel, Jenny continues viewing the displays and comes across the Queen's magic mirror from Snow White's story.)*

Mirror, mirror, on the wall.

**ALEX:** *(Crossing to the mirror:)* I'm the fairest of them all.

*(They pretend to primp in front of the mirror, pushing each other aside in a good-natured manner. Alex soon tires of their game and looks around again.)*

Ooh. Are those Jack's magic beans? *(Moving to the beans:)* Let's throw them out the window and see what happens.

*(Alex tries to open the window. Jenny hurries to her side and grabs her hand.)*

**JENNY:** Wait!

**ALEX:** Just kidding.

**JENNY:** *(Discovering the trunk:)* This is an unusual looking trunk.

**ALEX:** *(Reading label on the trunk:)* Private property of Ella, once known as...Cinderella?

*(Alex opens the trunk and finds a large diary.)*

**JENNY:** Maybe we shouldn't read this. *(Pointing to the diary:)* It says "Private," right here.

**ALEX:** Hey, this museum is hundreds of years old. Cinderella was from centuries ago. What would she care if we read her

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diary? (*Reading the cover:*) "Cinderella's Chronicles, written during her first twenty years."

**JENNY:** Let me see that. The pages are brittle and falling apart. Maybe we'd better put it back in the trunk. Maybe we should return to the hotel. Maybe we're not supposed to be here.

**ALEX:** It's my great-grandmother's property. And *her* mother's before her, and *her* mother's before her, and *her* –

**JENNY:** I get the picture!

*(As Alex begins reading aloud, CINDERELLA enters, unseen by the girls. She is barefoot, and her clothes are ragged. She will join Alex in "reading" the diary by reciting the words with her, and then take over as indicated below. Here and in the future occurrences, after Alex or Jenny stops reading aloud, the girls read along silently as Cinderella speaks the lines.)*

**ALEX:** *I cannot remember my mother at all, as she died in giving birth to me. And I can barely remember my father, although I do recall with great affection his large, tickly moustache and how he'd read to me each night before bedtime.*

**ALEX AND CINDERELLA:** *I began writing stories when I was quite small, and he told me I was not only beautiful but very talented. It was my father who inspired my love of books and knowledge.*

**CINDERELLA:** *Alas, he died when I was still very young, but not before he had remarried. Unfortunately, my father's wife was a rather shrewish woman who wasted no time in taking charge of the household. Her name was Gertrude, and her two daughters from a previous marriage – for she was a widow – were named –*

*(GERTRUDE enters with an envelope.)*

**GERTRUDE:** Desiree! Deanna! Come on, girls. Get with the program! Desiree! Deanna!

**JENNY:** Do you see her?

**ALEX:** It's as if she materialized out of nowhere.

**JENNY:** Or out of the journal.

*(Jenny and Alex look at each other, scream and drop the diary. DESIREE enters dancing and singing a mindless tune.)*

**DESIREE:** What is up? What is down? What is going on all around?

**GERTRUDE:** Where's your sister?

**DESIREE:** *(Starts to dance and sing again.)* I don't know. I don't care. Don't you love my long blonde hair?

**GERTRUDE:** Deanna!

*(DEANNA enters with a very strange walk, mostly on her heels, and barefoot.)*

**DEANNA:** Did you call, Mother? I came just as quickly as I could. I was painting my toe nails and didn't want to smudge them.

**GERTRUDE:** Listen up, my pets. We have just received an announcement from the Queen. She is holding a very elegant and important ball, and at that ball the Prince will seek a bride.

**DESIREE AND DEANNA:** Ugh!

**DESIREE:** The Prince is creepy, Mother.

**DEANNA:** Yeah. Ever since the witch Botchula cast a spell on him.

**DESIREE:** He wouldn't marry her.

**DEANNA:** So she turned him into...

**DESIREE AND DEANNA:** A frog.

*(They high-five. Then the three characters freeze.)*

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**JENNY:** (*Picking up the diary:*) Keep reading!

**ALEX:** *My stepsisters thought they were beautiful and clever, but really they were just self-centered and put on airs. They made fun of my writing, and burdened me with so many chores...*

*(Cinderella, unseen by the girls and the other characters, joins in again.)*

**ALEX AND CINDERELLA:** *...that I was forced to stay awake until the wee hours of the morning to write in this journal or create a short story or fashion a poem.*

**CINDERELLA:** *When I heard my stepsisters and stepmother talking about the ball, I wanted just for once to leave my chores and have some fun, but when I mentioned this they laughed.*

*(Entering the scene, Cinderella addresses Gertrude.)*

I would like to attend as well. Since Father died, I've been stuck in the house doing chores. I've tried not to complain, for Father always said a well brought up young lady never complains, but I haven't left our property for ten years!

*(The others laugh at her.)*

**GERTRUDE:** Don't be...

*(Gertrude waves her hand, searching for the right word.)*

**DEANNA:** Tiresome.

**DESIREE:** Insensitive.

**DEANNA:** Inappropriate.

**DESIREE:** Stupid.

**GERTRUDE:** Pushy.

**DESIREE:** You have to be beautiful and talented to go to the ball, Cinderella.

*(Desiree sings a few notes.)*

**CINDERELLA:** Just Ella. My name is Ella.

**DEANNA:** You have to be refined to go to the ball, like moi.

**CINDERELLA:** I can speak French, too. Je m'appelle Ella.

**DESIREE AND DEANNA:** *Cinder-ella.*

**GERTRUDE:** I've reached my decision.

*(Cinderella looks at Gertrude expectantly.)*

You must stay here and clean the house. When Desiree or Deanna is chosen as the Prince's bride, the royal family will surely come to visit. It's your duty to ensure that the house is spotless. You would want your father to be proud of you, wouldn't you? *(To her daughters:)* Come along, my sweethearts, we must plan our dresses and hairstyles for the ball.

*(As Gertrude, Deanna and Desiree exit, chattering and laughing, the daughters joke loudly.)*

**DEANNA:** Will the Frog Prince's bride inherit the castle when he *croaks*?

**DESIREE:** Maybe there will be a *rewart* for the girl's family!

**DEANNA:** I don't know. But the suspense is *ribbeting*.

*(Alone, a dejected Cinderella sits and freezes.)*

**ALEX:** I don't remember the stepsisters making bad puns.

**JENNY:** That was just...creepy. Where did they come from?

**ALEX:** I think we conjured them up by reading the diary.

*(Alex and Jenny look at each other, scream and drop the diary again.)*

Be brave. This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to learn the truth about Cinderella. Uh, Ella.

**JENNY:** We should leave.

**ALEX:** No, no, no. But you read this time.

**JENNY:** (*Picking up the diary, but hesitating:*) It's sorta kinda like the story in the fairy tale books.

**ALEX:** The characters seem so alive. Go on.

**JENNY:** It's a little scary.

**ALEX/CINDERELLA/OFFSTAGE CHARACTERS:** Read the diary already!

**JENNY:** *True to her word, my stepmother and stepsisters went to the ball without me. I must admit, I gave in to self-pity and cried a little.*

**JENNY AND CINDERELLA:** *I was so lonely.*

**CINDERELLA:** *The only friends I had were the birds who flew in the backyard and the house cat, and sometimes a rabbit or squirrel from the woods behind our home.*

*(Several ANIMALS enter, move around the stage and console Cinderella, who plays with them. Animals beckon to Alex and Jenny, or make sounds asking the girls to join them. After some hesitation, Alex and Jenny take on the roles of other animals. There is momentary tension when the CAT faces off with a BIRD, but Cinderella coaxes them into peaceful coexistence. Finally, the Animals exit.)*

**JENNY:** (*Reading:*) *After my stepmother and stepsisters left for the dance at the palace, I fell asleep in front of the fireplace, my broom across my lap. I woke myself with a short, sharp but ladylike snore and saw before me...*

*(GODMOTHER enters, carrying a huge purse. She is colorfully dressed.)*

**GODMOTHER:** Your groovy fairy godmother, chick.

**CINDERELLA:** I didn't know I had a groovy fairy godmother.

**GODMOTHER:** I've been pursuing inner peace in the far, far, far East for the past fifteen years. Just flew in and came straight to you. Look at this place. Far out! Hang loose. Uh, fear not. We're going to make everything copasetic.

**CINDERELLA:** Excuse me?

**GODMOTHER:** The Ball. The Palace. The Prince. You.

**CINDERELLA:** But I can't go in these rags. And I have no way to get to the palace.

**GODMOTHER:** Ah. Not to worry, my sweet Ella. Here. Take my hands. Close your eyes. Now hum.

*(Cinderella and Godmother hold hands and hum.)*

*(Intones:) Spirits close, spirits far, make things better than they are.*

*(Godmother pulls away from Cinderella and looks around the room.)*

**CINDERELLA:** Uh, they're not better yet.

**GODMOTHER:** Patience, my dear. So, do you have some animals around here? Pets, wildlife, trolls?

**CINDERELLA:** *(Confused:)* Yes. They're my friends. Except, no trolls. You won't hurt the animals, will you?

**GODMOTHER:** Stay cool. What I can do I can also undo. Bring me three or four. Oh, and a nice watermelon from the garden. Leave the watermelon right outside the door.

**CINDERELLA:** Yes, ma'am.

*(Cinderella exits. Godmother removes a pad and pencil from her oversized bag and puts on her glasses. She hums as she makes a list. Cinderella returns, holding a large watermelon with some difficulty. Several Animals follow her.)*

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**GODMOTHER:** Outside the door. (Noticing Cinderella's blank look:) The watermelon.

*(Cinderella looks down, realizes her mistake, then exits with the watermelon and returns without it. Meanwhile, Godmother lines up the Animals. She will touch each with her wand at the appropriate moment. She will also remove the appropriate hat or ears from her oversize purse and place the costume pieces on the actors.)*

Hmm. You would make a lovely driver.

*(The chosen animal takes on human posture and plays with imaginary reins, as if practicing.)*

You two, such simpatico horses.

*(The two chosen animals grow into HORSES, but she stops them from completely transforming. [If necessary, a single horse may be used and the line changed.]*)

Wait! Outside, outside. You need room to grow to your full size.

*(The Horses exit. "Neighs" come from offstage.)*

*(To the remaining animal:)* And you. You will be a very distinguished footman. You are to obey Ella's every wish.

*(The chosen animal takes on human posture and bows to Cinderella.)*

**CINDERELLA:** But...I don't understand.

**GODMOTHER:** Gentlemen, out.

*(Footman and Driver exit. Godmother takes Cinderella by the hand and leads her to the doorway, then waves her wand toward the outdoors. There is a loud "puff" noise, and Cinderella is amazed at what she sees offstage.)*

**CINDERELLA:** Watermelon is a lovely fruit, but I never saw one transform into a horse-drawn carriage before.

**FOOTMAN:** (*Reentering:*) Mademoiselle, your carriage awaits.

**CINDERELLA:** But...my dress.

**GODMOTHER:** Never fear. Footman, Mademoiselle will be ready shortly. Give us some privacy, please. You may wait by the carriage.

*(Footman bows and exits.)*

Slip this on.

*(Godmother helps her with the gown, which slips on over Cinderella's ragged dress, then carefully places a tiara on her head.)*

Now, for the *pièce de résistance*.

**CINDERELLA:** You speak French, too?

**GODMOTHER:** *Mais oui.* Of course. It's part of the core curriculum at Fairy Godmother school.

**CINDERELLA:** Oh.

*(Godmother pulls the slippers from her purse.)*

Glass shoes. Oh, I don't know about those. They're beautiful, but I'm afraid I'll stumble and break them.

**GODMOTHER:** Ah, but they only look like glass. They're made of plastic.

**CINDERELLA:** Plas...? Plis? Plestite?

**GODMOTHER:** Plastic. It's an organic compound...well, it's not...you see, polymerization... Not important. Just enjoy. (*Returning her glasses to her purse:*) Be sure you are back by the last stroke of midnight. There are limits to my magic powers.

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Time to split. (*Starting to exit:*) Have a ball! (*Laughs at her own joke:*) Keep it real.

(*Godmother exits.*)

**CINDERELLA:** (*Calling after Godmother:*) But, but...wait. Well, goodbye, then. (*Looks down at her feet:*) Plas...?

(*Cinderella shakes her head and exits.*)

**ALEX AND JENNY:** Plastic?

(*They look at each other, scream and drop the diary.*)

**JENNY:** (*Picking up the diary, and handing it to Alex:*) Your turn to read.

**ALEX:** *When I arrived at the palace of the frog once known as Prince, I could hear music coming from the ballroom.*

(*BALL ATTENDANTS enter, singing "Hop It" and dancing. They stop and encourage Alex and Jenny to join in, then start the song all over again, as Cinderella sits on a bench and watches.*)

**BALL ATTENDANTS:** ONE, TWO, THREE, FOUR,  
HOP, HOP, HOP.

ONE, TWO, THREE FOUR, HOP.

HOP.

DO YOU WANT TO HOP IT?

FLOP IT? MOP IT?

BOP IT!

ONE TWO THREE FOUR,

HOP, HOP, HOP.

ONE, TWO, THREE, FOUR, HOP.

HOP.

EVERYONE IS HOPPING,  
NEVER, EVER STOPPING!

ONE, TWO THREE, FOUR,

HOP, HOP, HOP.

ONE TWO TREE FOUR, HOP.  
HOP.

*(At the end of the song, Alex and Jenny return to the trunk and sit.)*

**ALEX:** *(Reading:)* Everyone was dancing and drinking bubbly water and laughing.

**ALEX AND CINDERELLA:** *Even my stepmother and stepsisters had smiles on their lips. I nearly didn't recognize them.*

*(FROG PRINCE and QUEEN [or KING] move to center stage.)*

**CINDERELLA:** *Then, as the Prince, that is, the Frog, that is, the Frog Prince – ribbeted and hopped his way to the center of the ballroom, the Queen made an announcement.*

**QUEEN:** *(Very loudly:)* Attention. Attention.

*(Ball Attendants react to the Queen's unexpected volume.)*

My son, the Prince, will now select a partner for the slow hop.

*(An elaborate choosing scene follows. For example, Frog Prince might recite "Eenie, meenie, minie, moe, catch a tadpole by the toe." Each girl tries to attract his attention. Gertrude pushes her daughters at him. Cinderella shyly hangs back.)*

**FROG PRINCE:** I choose... *(Suddenly turning to Cinderella:)* ...you.

*(Whispers and murmurs from everyone else.)*

**CINDERELLA:** I...I don't know how to dance.

**FROG PRINCE:** Just follow me. Do what I do.

*(Frog Prince hops and ribbets and Cinderella does the same. Everyone else pairs off for the "Mirror Dance." [See Author's Notes.]*

*(As dance ends:)* That was invigorating.

**CINDERELLA:** Oh, yes.

**FROG PRINCE:** I feel quite hoppy.

*(All the characters freeze.)*

**ALEX:** *(Reading:)* I didn't want to make a fuss...

**ALEX AND CINDERELLA:** I really didn't...

**CINDERELLA:** ...but my feet in those...platypus...playful...  
pola...plaster...

**ALL:** Plastic!

**CINDERELLA:** Plastic slippers were really hurting.

*(Cinderella sits on the bench, removes a shoe, and rubs her foot. Suddenly, actors form a "clock machine," singing out twelve chimes. [See Author's Notes.]*

Midnight? Oh, no.

*(Cinderella runs offstage. Frog Prince tries to stop her but fails. He crosses to the bench where she left her slipper and picks it up. ALL exit except Frog Prince.)*

**ALEX:** *(Reading:)* I found out later what happened at the palace after I ran away.

**FROG PRINCE:** What a strange slipper. I will take this to my laboratory and determine through scientific testing the material from which it is made.

*(Frog Prince exits.)*

**ALEX:** *(Reading:)* Without a word to anyone, the Frog Prince took off to his secret laboratory in the swamp. Meanwhile...

**ALEX AND CINDERELLA:** ...my godmother met me outside the house.

*(Cinderella enters with the Animals from the earlier scene. She has on one slipper and is limping. She carries the watermelon.)*

**CINDERELLA:** *By then, all the animals had returned to their original size and shape.*

*(Godmother enters and takes the pad and pen from her purse.)*

**GODMOTHER:** On time. *(Peering over her glasses:)* Barely. Let's see. Watermelon?

*(Cinderella looks down and exits with the watermelon to the garden. She reenters, carrying the slipper instead of the watermelon. She places the slipper where Godmother will not immediately see it. In the meantime, Godmother checks each animal off her list and places costume pieces in her purse. The Animals perform in characteristic fashion before being waved offstage by Godmother.)*

*(Exchanging costume pieces with Cinderella:)* Tiara? Check. Gown? Check. What else? Slippers!

*(Cinderella tentatively hands her the remaining slipper.)*

Only one? I must have both magic slippers for the Karma particles to realign in their proper sphere.

**CINDERELLA:** I'll find it. I promise. Please wait here.

**ALEX AND CINDERELLA:** *So I left...*

**CINDERELLA:** *...in search of my paster...placid...*

**All:** Plastic!

**CINDERELLA:** *Slipper.*

*(As Cinderella exits, Godmother starts to pace. She will exit as Jenny begins to read.)*

**JENNY:** Ooh. Let me read!

*(Alex reluctantly turns over the diary to her.)*

*(Reading:)* After many hours, I found a kind palace servant who remembered seeing me at the hop.

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*(Cinderella enters on the other side of the stage from the girls.)*

**JENNY AND CINDERELLA:** *He told me that the Frog Prince was in his laboratory and gave me directions, warning me not to reveal the location to anyone else.*

**CINDERELLA:** *I got lost a good number of times, but finally found the Frog Prince in the swampland.*

*(Frog Prince enters, muttering scientific-sounding nonsense words.)*

I came for the slipper.

**FROG PRINCE:** A strange slipper.

**CINDERELLA:** A plastic slipper.

*(Cinderella beams at having said the word properly, and everyone applauds from offstage.)*

**FROG PRINCE:** Huh?

**CINDERELLA:** Let me explain.

**JENNY:** *(Reading:) I explained as best I could about the slipper. Then we went to find my fairy godmother. She was still behind the house.*

*(Cinderella and Frog Prince circle the stage.)*

**JENNY AND CINDERELLA:** *Fortunately, my stepmother, Gertrude, and my stepsisters, Desiree and Deanna, were sound asleep.*

*(Godmother enters, smiling.)*

**GODMOTHER:** A slightly magic-enhanced sleep.

**CINDERELLA:** *My fairy godmother explained plastic to the Frog Prince. He was amazed.*

*(The three huddle, occasionally tossing out a word, such as "process" or "compound." They break apart.)*

**FROG PRINCE:** I am amazed.

**GODMOTHER:** Now, your highness, would you like me to return you to your princely shape?

**FROG PRINCE:** Well, thank you, madam, you are too kind. But...no.

**GODMOTHER AND CINDERELLA:** No?

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