

Scene Two
The Stepmother's Manor House

(Immediately following. CINDERELLA is cleaning the hearth as the DOVE flies on and perches in the tree. The STEPMOTHER, GRACE, and JOY enter in high spirits, leaving the door wide open. The STEPMOTHER carries a flier announcing the ball.)

STPMOTHER, GRACE & JOY. *(A cappella.)* "The prince is giving a ball! The prince is giving a ball! They've spread the news from far and wide, the prince is giving a..."

STPMOTHER. Cinderella, you let the fire go out. It's cold enough to hang meat in here!

JOY. Well, close the door, Cinderella - duh!

(CINDERELLA crosses and closes the door.)

STPMOTHER. *(To GRACE and JOY.)* Now you listen and you listen good. We have exactly one week until the ball and I do not intend to waste this opportunity. You two will be the loveliest, most well-spoken and vivacious maidens at that ball if it's the last thing I do! Am I understood?

GRACE & JOY. Yes, Mother.

STPMOTHER. Good. Just imagine - the prince asking for my daughter's hand in marriage!

GRACE. *(Leering at JOY.)* Which daughter is that, I wonder.

JOY. I'm younger and more appealing.

(The door creaks open.)

GRACE. The oldest marries first.

JOY. That's an old wives' tale!

GRACE. Why do you think there's so many old wives runnin' around!

STPMOTHER. Girls, don't start!

JOY. Mother, Cinderella simply refuses to close that door!

CINDERELLA. But I...

STEPMOTHER. Hold your tongue and do as you're told! Now once and for all, close that door!

(Again CINDERELLA closes the door.)

GRACE. Have you ever seen a lazier girl in your life?

JOY. Who *you* callin' lazy?

GRACE. You want a piece o' me?!

STEPMOTHER. Enough already! Now sit, my daughters - we need to have a talk.

(GRACE and JOY sit on the sofa; CINDERELLA also moves to sit.)

Not you. I want to talk to my *real* daughters. You tend that fire and serve us tea.

CINDERELLA. Yes, Stepmother.

(She starts for the fireplace.)

GRACE. I want some crumpets with my tea!

JOY. Like I don't? Crumpets, Cinderella!

CINDERELLA. Coming right up.

(The dialogue continues as CINDERELLA goes about stoking the fire.)

STEPMOTHER. My darlings - I cannot stress strongly enough how imperative it is that you make a proper impression upon the prince. You know, I will not be around forever to care for you.

JOY. Why not?

GRACE. Yeah. Where are *you* goin'?

STEPMOTHER. What I mean to say is that I do not intend to spend the rest of my life slaving away in this house.

(Shouting across the room.)

Cinderella, the tea!

(CINDERELLA exits to the kitchen.)

I have devoted my entire life to your comfort and well-being. Is it asking too much that I spend my golden years in a cottage by the sea?

JOY.

GRA

STEP

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JOY.

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GRA

JOY.

STEP

! Now

JOY. And leave us here?

GRACE. Alone?

STEPMOTHER. (*Exasperated.*) Not alone! With *hus-bands!*

(*CINDERELLA enters and hangs the tea kettle over the fire.*)

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You know, it takes a certain amount of income to maintain our lifestyle. The funds your stepfather left will not last forever and money does not grow on trees.

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(*CINDERELLA exits to the kitchen.*)

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GRACE. (*With know-it-all superiority.*) I know that. It comes from the bank.

STEPMOTHER. And how do you suppose it gets into the bank?

JOY. The banker goes and gets it from...well, wherever it *does* grow but not on trees.

STEPMOTHER. Money doesn't grow anywhere! It's inherited! Which is precisely why I am determined to see each of you marry within the year. So either you make a proper impression upon the prince, or it's back to the butcher and Master Boxhorn! Am I understood?

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GRACE & JOY. Yes, Mother.

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STEPMOTHER. Good. Just imagine - *me!* The mother of a princess! Now come along, girls - enough excitement for one day. It's time for your beauty rest and, Lord knows, you can use it.

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(*CINDERELLA enters with the tea service and crumpets, not noticing as the door creaks open.*)

CINDERELLA. Here you go - fresh-baked crumpets and...

STEPMOTHER. (*Impatiently.*) Not now, Cinderella - we're going to nap. Have dinner prepared when we awake. Smoke the salmon.

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GRACE. (*Exiting.*) Bake the bread!

JOY. (*Exiting.*) Poach the pears!

STEPMOTHER. And Cinderella - close that door!