



The Characters

- BARON HARDCENTRE - An aged aurally challenged titled gentleman.
- BARONESS HARDCENTRE - His lovely wife.
- STARBURST and TWIXY - Their older daughters.
- CINDERELLA - Their youngest daughter.
- BUTTONS - The family pageboy.
- PRINCE CHARMING - Heir to all Sweetieland.
- SMARTIE PANTS and CRUNCHIE - The Prince's henchmen.
- FAIRY GODMOTHER - A godmother who's a fairy.

PLUS - Market traders, ball guests, some liquorice allsorts, mice, and the entire population of Sweetieland.

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ACT ONE

- Scene one We meet Buttons.
- Scene two Market day in Sweetietown.
- Scene three Spare Buttons.
- Scene four A sad kitchen.
- Scene five Two silly people come on.
- Scene six Sweetietown. Later.
- Scene seven A future King of Hearts?
- Scene eight The Baron's luxurious home.
- Scene nine We peep into a girls room.
- Scene ten That kitchen again.
- Scene eleven Outside the ballroom.
- Scene twelve The kitchen . . . *again?*

ACT TWO

- Scene one Outside the ballroom.
- Scene two The fabulous Ball.
- Scene three On the way home.
- Scene four Some typical home scenes.
- Scene five A bit of a slushy moment.
- Scene six Back in that luxury pad.
- Scene seven A quiet spot somewhere.
- Scene eight Baron's glitzy place again.
- Scene nine A dancing class.
- Scene ten Trumpets . . . confetti . . .
- Scene eleven Aaaaaaaaaaaaaah !

ACT ONE - SCENE ONE

(ENTER BUTTONS, FRONT OF CURTAIN. HE IS HOLDING A BAG OF SWEETS)

BUTTONS: Life's a bit odd, isn't it? All the different people you meet. The rich ones. The poor ones. Some are friendly. Some are just plain horrible. (HOLDS UP THE BAG) Some are sweet. (DIGS IN - FINDS A TOFFEE) Some people can be a little sticky. Some hard on the outside - but when you get to know them, they've got a soft centre. It's like me, I'm very trusting. I fall in love a bit easily . . . and I'm not very successful.

There's me . . . (CROSSES STAGE AND PUTS DOWN A LIQUORICE ALLSORT STAGE LEFT) and the Prince, who lives way up there in Butterscotch castle . . . (WALKS TO STAGE RIGHT, AND PUTS DOWN A CHOCOLATE) . . . world's apart. He's got everything a young man could desire. A fast coach. Silk knickers. His choice of all the beautiful girls in Sweetieland.

And me? Twenty pence a year. Not even a bike. And a name that causes mirth wherever I go. Buttons. I ask you.

You look like a polite bunch, but if you thought you'd get a laugh you'd shout 'Chocolate Buttons' wouldn't you. They all do . . . when I walk into town all the kids shout . . .

(CHOCOLATE BUTTONS) No. Louder than that. (CHOCOLATE BUTTONS) The other thing of course is . . . I'm different from the Prince because I've found . . . (ROMANTICALLY) true love. And he hasn't. Let's hope he never meets her. Do you know her name? Tell me. (AUDIENCE - CINDERELLA - hopefully) How did you know that? Must go. I'll collect my choccy and my liquorice allsort. I'll just . . . (CHORUS OF UGLY SISTERS SHOUTING 'BUTTONS') No time. See you later.

(BUTTONS EXITS CENTRE STAGE. SPOTLIGHTS FALL ON THE 2 SWEETS, WHO, IN A FLASH, TURN INTO SWEETIE PEOPLE)

SONG ONE

(THE SWEETIE PEOPLE STAND CENTRE STAGE AND ANNOUNCE)

Isn't it fab, isn't it grand.
It's sweetie time in Sweetieland.
It's market day in Sweetietown.
So grin a lot, and let's not frown.
Join the party, it's the time
ONE: To sing and dance.
TWO: That doesn't rhyme.
ONE: Oh yes it does you'd be surprised.
TWO: So come with us before sunset.

(THEY WALK OFF BICKERING)

ONE: If you'd have said sunrise it would have rhymed really well.

TWO: But the market goes on until sunset.
ONE: It doesn't matter. It would have sounded better.
TWO: Wouldn't.
ONE: Would.
TWO: Wouldn't, wouldn't, wouldn't.
ONE: Would.

(THEY EXIT STAGE LEFT)

SCENE TWO

(CURTAINS OPEN TO REVEAL SWEETIETOWN MARKET, WITH AN ACCENT ON SWEETS. THE TOWNSFOLK SING . . .)

SONG TWO

(WOMAN WITH PRAM WALKS ACROSS)

TRADER: Morning missus. What do you fancy?
WOMAN: Leonardo di Caprio.
TRADER: I meant . . . off my trolley.
WOMAN: I know you are.
TRADER: How's the little one today?
WOMAN: Fine.
TRADER: (LOOKS IN PRAM) Hasn't he grown.
WOMAN: (LIFTS OUT LARGE JELLY BABY AND HUGS IT) If he keeps growing like this he'll be a jelly tot soon.
TRADER: Or a jelly bean.
WOMAN: That's his sister's name.
TRADER: What?
WOMAN: Billy Jean.

(BUTTONS ENTERS HURRIEDLY, IRRITATED)

BUTTONS: Oh come on. Let's get on with the story.
(EVERYONE ON STAGE SPEAKS): Hello *Chocolate* Buttons. He he.
BUTTONS: (TO AUDIENCE) See what I mean? Anyway (PEERS AT CLOCK AT FAR END OF THEATRE) This panto's been going for eight minutes, and there's no sign of a plot or a story . . . let alone a handsome prince. Come on.
WOMAN: (STALKS OFF WITH PRAM) Well of all the cheek.

(2 UGLY SISTERS ENTER. EVERYONE BACKS OFF. BUTTONS RUNS FOR IT)

BUTTONS: I'm off. Good luck with them.
TWIXY: Well Starburst. Here we are dear.
STARBURST: Yes Twixy. And look how people stare at us. They obviously find us totally attractive.
TWIXY: Well, me anyway.
STARBURST: Rubbish. they want me to reveal my pretty ankles. They're a turn on.

TWIXY: Like a couple of old bath taps. (TO AUDIENCE) Turn on. Bath taps. Oh keep up or . . . (SOFTENS) or I won't let you kiss me later.

STARBURST: Kiss your what?

TWIXY: Opal Fruit. Oh I'm so sorry Starburst, I can't get used to your name change.

STARBURST: It's easy to remember. Star . . . because I am one.

TWIXY: And burst because you look like you're about to.

STARBURST: Enough. Let's do our shopping. (TURNS TO TRADER) Three tons of Sherbert Lemons please. (HOLDS OUT PINNY FOR ENORMOUS FILLING UP) And 2000 Fruit Lumps. (ANOTHER LARGE AMOUNT. SHE IS NOW LEANING FORWARD)

TWIXY: Careful dear.

STARBURST: 10 stone of . . . guess what?

TRADER: Dunno.

STARBURST: (LOOKS CLOSELY AT HIM AND GRINS) Well?

TRADER: Marshmallows?

STARBURST: No, cheeky boy. Love Hearts of course. (AFTER THIS SHE IS LEANING WORRYINGLY) . . . and, um . . . one Dolly Mixture. (THE TRADER DROPS IT IN, AND SHE FALLS FLAT)

TWIXY: Oh dear. (SHE NOTICES BARON HARDCENTRE AND BARONESS HARDCENTRE ENTERING. SHE RUNS TO THEM) Mummy dear. Daddy dearest. Look what naughty Starburst has done.

BARONESS: Get up dear. You're such a heavy eater.

BARON: What?

BARONESS: (LOUDLY) Heavy eater.

BARON: What?

BARONESS: (LOUDER) Heavy eater.

BARON: Happy Easter?

BARONESS: Oh never mind. Get her up someone. You, man. Get her up on her pretty little feet. Hurry.

(EVERYBODY STARTS TO PULL STARBURST ABOUT. FINALLY THEY GET HER UP)

STARBURST: Mumsy. It wasn't my fault. Twixy told me to.

TWIXY: (WALKS OFF - GETS A CRICKET BAT AND HITS STARBURST WITH IT) Didn't.

BARONESS: (GRABS BAT) Now girls. Enough. We must return home. I want to be cruel and heartless towards that vile servant girl. (THOUGHTFULLY) I can feel it coming on.

TWIXY: Oh yes!

STARBURST: Horrid ugly thing. Lead the way Mumsy. Come on Dada.

BARON: Eh?

BARONESS: Home. Quick.

BARON: Home sick? Better go then.

BARONESS: (SHOUTS) I said home . . . quick.

BARON: I'm hungry. Can't I buy some toffees?

BARONESS: You'll have a meal when you get home.

BARON: Eh?

BARONESS: (LOUDLY) Meal when you get home.

BARON: Millennium dome?

(THEY ALL EXIT AS LIGHTS FADE - BUTTONS ENTERS SADLY AS CURTAINS CLOSE)

SCENE THREE

BUTTONS: In case you never read the papers, let me tell you a bit about all this. There are three sisters (COUNTS ON FINGERS) Starburst. The one that looks like an oversize fudge bar . . . and Twixy, the . . . um . . . other one. The third? The third has been brought up to think she is ugly, plain, irritating and annoying to everybody. She has been told all this so often, shouted at by everyone so often . . . that she believes it to be true. That spooky Baroness. That daft old father. Those vile sisters. They've all got a lot to answer for. But to me she's perfect. She's . . . well, she's Cinderella.

SONG THREE

BUTTONS: According to the programme we go to the kitchen next. You'll find out that everything I've been saying is true.

(BUTTONS EXITS)

SCENE FOUR

(CURTAIN OPENS TO KITCHEN SCENE - CINDERELLA IS SITTING ALONE BY THE FIRE)

CINDERELLA: If I wasn't so ugly and foul perhaps I could get out more. My beautiful sisters dress in all their finery and hit the town. What do I do? Sit here in rags among the cinders. (LOOKS AT AUDIENCE) Get the picture? All they do is tell me off. Criticise me, and make me work until my hands get red. They always want feeding. Always. And between meals it's chocolates and sweets the whole time. How do they keep their supermodel figures? Just chocolates and sweets. That's all they think of.

VOICE OFF: When's dinner?

CINDERELLA: (CALLS BACK) After Eight.

There is one thing though. Buttons is always telling me that *I'm* the pretty one. Can you believe it? (CRIES OF YES FROM AUDIENCE) Nor can I.

SONG FOUR

CINDERELLA: I love Buttons. I do.

(ENTER BUTTONS)

BUTTONS: I heard that. Can it be true, Cinderella my . . . ?

CINDERELLA: But only as a friend. Oh, hello Buttons.

BUTTONS: Foiled again.

CINDERELLA: Oh Buttons. I'm so sad. I have a mighty feeling right here . . . (HAND ON HEART)

BUTTONS: Do you?

CINDERELLA: A mighty, mighty feeling.

BUTTONS: *Do* you?

CINDERELLA: What is to become of me? Will I ever find true love?

BUTTONS: Maybe your true love isn't so far away Cinderella.

CINDERELLA: Not far away?

BUTTONS: *Very* near in fact.

CINDERELLA: *Very* near?

BUTTONS: Oh yes.

CINDERELLA: Oh Buttons. (SHE RUNS TOWARDS HIS OUTSTRETCHED ARMS BUT GOES STRAIGHT PAST HIM TO THE DOOR) Is he out here?

BUTTONS: (SQUEEZES AN 'AAAAH' OUT OF THE AUDIENCE) I think you . . . er . . . missed him.

(STARBURST AND TWIXIE CRASH IN)

STARBURST: Buttons! Go immediately and do something menial.

BUTTONS: (SALUTES) Yes Jarbust.

STARBURST: Starburst.

(BUTTONS EXITS)

STARBURST: And as for you.

TWIXY: As for you . . . (TURNS TO AUDIENCE) What shall we do to her? Shall we get her to wash the floor? It is a bit (POURS FLOUR ON FLOOR) . . . dirty.

STARBURST: No. Let's get her to wash her clothes.

CINDERELLA: But they're clean.

STARBURST: (POURS GRAVY ON THEM) No they're not. You've spilt something *all* over them. (TO AUDIENCE) Hasn't she? (AUDIENCE RESPOND) Oh yes she has (etc)

TWIXY: Oh dear. I seem to have knocked these over (KNOCKS OVER PILES OF SAUCEPANS)

STARBURST: Deary me dear. How did you manage that? Was it like this?

STARBURST AND TWIXY SPILL SOMETHING ELSE, CACKLING MERRILY. CINDERELLA STANDS BACK IN DESPAIR. THE BARONESS ENTERS, FOLLOWED BY BARON HARDCENTRE. FIRSTLY, THE AUDIENCE GETS THE IMPRESSION THAT THE BARONESS IS GOING TO REPREMAND THE UGLY SISTERS - BUT . . .)

BARONESS: I've told you about this behaviour before. I will not have mindless stupidity and cruelty in my house . . . er his house.

How can you treat my dear little . . . (POINTS VAGUELY) in such a foul way. Poor little poor little girls. Come to Mumsy.

(BOTH SISTERS RUN TO BE CUDDLED AS BARONESS POINTS AT CINDERELLA - THEY PRETEND TO CRY)

TWIXY: Oh it was terrible Mummy. She set upon us. Look - I have a smear of flour on my (RUNS OVER TO TABLE AND SMEARS HERSELF WITH FLOUR) nose. How do you like that?

BARON: Your nose?

STARBURST: Silence. You must do something Mumsy. She turned on us. Threw those things about.

BARONESS: Right. (GRABS BROOM AND CHARGES AT CINDERELLA. SHE IS ABOUT TO HIT HER WHEN BUTTONS RUNS IN)

BUTTONS: Stop! The Prince is going to be on in the very next scene. (BUTTONS EXITS)

BARONESS: (IMMEDIATELY STOPS CHARGING AND BECOMES DREAMY) The Prince? Ah! The man who will be asking for the hand of my daughter very, *very* soon. My pretty, pretty daughter. (HANDS CLASPED - SHE IS IN REVERIE) But which one? He may have to take two wives. How could anyone choose between them?

Will it be Prince Charming and his lovely bride Princess Starburst? Or will it be Prince Charming and his lovely bride Princess Twixy? Or perhaps he'll want to marry me.

No . . . this is a fairy story. Not a disaster movie.

Oh! Which will it be, I ask myself? (CHANGES MOOD DRAMATICALLY) You. (TO CINDERELLA) Clear up this filthy mess you've made. You two. Go and slip into something a bit revealing. I've got an idea the Prince may be round with his henchmen to . . . hench. You. (TURNS TO BARON HARDCENTRE) Go to your room.

BARON: Room. Room.

BARONESS: Eh?

BARON: (MAKES LIKE HE'S DRIVING A STEERING WHEEL AND EXITS) Room. Room. Room.

(THE 2 UGLY SISTERS AND BARONESS WATCH HIM GO, SHAKE THEIR HEADS AND EXIT QUIETLY AS THE LIGHTS FADE. CINDERELLA, ALONE, SINGS)

SONG FOUR (REPRISE)

(THE CURTAINS CLOSE AS CINDERELLA STARTS TO SWEEP THE STAGE)

SCENE FIVE

(THE LIGHTS COME UP, SMARTIE PANTS AND CRUNCHIE MARCH ON)

SMARTIE PANTS: Left. Left. Left right left. Bear left.

CRUNCHIE: If the bear left, maybe we should too. Besides, I'm getting tired. My foot hurts. What should I do?

SMARTIE PANTS: Limp. (TO AUDIENCE) When he was born he was so ugly the doctor slapped his mother.

CRUNCHIE: Things were rough when I was a baby . . .

SMARTIE PANTS: No talcum powder?

CRUNCHIE: I'll have you know, I got my good looks from my father.

SMARTIE PANTS: Was he a plastic surgeon? Anyway, when I had a sore foot like you've got the doctor said "I'll have you walking in an hour".

CRUNCHIE: And did he?

SMARTIE PANTS: Yer. He stole my bicycle. (TO AUDIENCE) By the way, I'm Smartie Pants (WAVES HAND AT SMARTIE-DESIGN TROUSERS) And this is Crunchie. I take him everywhere. Unfortunately, he always finds his way back. He was so poor when I first met him. What was the first thing you said to me?

CRUNCHIE: I said I haven't had a bite all day . . .

SMARTIE PANTS: So I bit him.

(ENTER PRINCE CHARMING)

PRINCE CHARMING: What are you two doing? Have you thought of an idea yet?

CRUNCHIE: Idea?

PRINCE CHARMING: I paid you a thousand pounds to think of a way of meeting a really nice girl. One that I could marry, and make my princess.

SMARTIE PANTS: So you did! And we've had lots of ideas. Now let me think . . .

PRINCE CHARMING: Come *on* . . .

CRUNCHIE: What about a net?

PRINCE CHARMING: Annette? Who's she?

CRUNCHIE: No. A *net*. We could throw it over the girl of your choice and drag her to the castle.

PRINCE CHARMING: That wouldn't work. Besides, I want her to fall in love with me for what I am, and not purely because I have ten million pounds, a castle, yacht, BMW coach, swimming pool, two hundred servants and a dog called Simon.

SMARTIE PANTS: I know. This is worth the thousand pounds. Why don't we change places? The way they do in fairy stories? I'll be the Prince and you can be Smartie Pants! They'll fall in love with me and then they'll find out I'm not the Prince.

CRUNCHIE: No, that's not right. They've got to fall in love with the Prince. Not you.

SMARTIE PANTS: In that case, I'll pretend to be Smartie Pants and he can pretend he's the Prince.

CRUNCHIE: But he is.

SMARTIE PANTS: Crunchie - there's a coach leaving in five minutes. Be under it.

PRINCE CHARMING: I'm sorry lads. If that's the best you can do, I want my thousand pounds back.

CRUNCHIE: But we've spent it.

PRINCE CHARMING: What on?

(SMARTIE PANTS AND CRUNCHIE RUN OFF AND BRING ON AN ENORMOUS INVITATION TO A BALL AT THE PALACE)

PRINCE CHARMING: (SHAKES HEAD) Do you know, when I think you two can't get any worse, more idiotic, or *just plain* stupid . . . you do something like this.

(SMARTIE PANTS AND CRUNCHIE LOOK VERY SAD) It's *brilliant!* A party! Yes! That's it! That's it! Have some smaller ones printed and get them to all the girls in the land . . . except the really naff ones. See you later! (PRINCE EXITS CHEERFULLY)

CRUNCHIE: I've got a wonderful idea.

SMARTIE PANTS: (BORED) What?

CRUNCHIE: Instead of having the invitations printed, let's just cut this one up into lots of squares, and write the invitation on every one!

SMARTIE PANTS: That's good! Maybe I've been a bit hard of you. I'm sure the doctor wasn't really rude about you when you were born.

CRUNCHIE: Oh no. He knew I would be really bright. That's why he tried to plug me into the mains.

SMARTIE PANTS: Can I drop you off somewhere?

CRUNCHIE: Oh yes . . .

SMARTIE PANTS: Beachy Head?

(THEY EXIT)

SCENE SIX

(CURTAIN OPENS ON SWEETIETOWN - SAD MUSIC. CINDERELLA ENTERS, STRUGGLING WITH SHOPPING. PASSERS-BY LOOK PITIFULLY SAD AT HER. SHE TRIPS AND DROPS THINGS. BUTTONS ENTERS)

BUTTONS: Here. Let me take that.

CINDERELLA: Oh thank goodness you're here Buttons. I don't think I could have walked another step. (THEY SIT DOWN ON THE EDGE OF THE STAGE)

BUTTONS: You know, Cinderella? Life isn't all about falling in love, and spending your life realising that it's not all as perfect as you imagined. It's not about romance really . . . it's about liking someone enough to be with them every day, as a friend. Not locked in their arms, but just being together at times like this.

CINDERELLA: Like this?

BUTTONS: When all the shopping of life has dropped all over the pavement, and you want some help picking it up. That's what it's all about.

CINDERELLA: Oh Buttons. My perfect world would be to have a wonderful, caring, selfless husband . . .

BUTTONS: Exactly . . .

CINDERELLA: And you! The two people I could spend my life with.

BUTTONS: Oh.

CINDERELLA: I don't need the money. A small castle would be fine . . .

BUTTONS: Oh.

CINDERELLA: Silly. I was just joking . . . but my love has got to be just that . . . my *love*. You are my best friend.

BUTTONS: Oh, that one.

CINDERELLA: If you like.

BUTTONS: Right. Say you love me or I won't tell you the news.

CINDERELLA: What news?

BUTTONS: Say it.

CINDERELLA: I love you . . .

BUTTONS: There's going to be an enormous ball at the Palace!

CINDERELLA: . . . as a friend.

BUTTONS: That's cheating. (IMITATES ROYAL MESSENGER) My lady? The Prince is proud and privileged to invite you . . . (TAKES CINDERELLA'S HAND - SHE STANDS) to a ball. To celebrate the fact that he's looking for a bird. There'll be the finest wines . . . superb fare . . . turkey, lobsters, game birds . . .

CINDERELLA: I thought you said he was looking for one . . .

BUTTONS: (DANCES) . . . and dancing until the soft milky sun peeps over the Palace towers. (THEY WHIRL ROUND) Will you give his Princeship the honour of showing?

CINDERELLA: It will be an honour. Should I RSVP?

BUTTONS: Consider it done. (PICKS UP SHOPPING) Lead the way. We have to make you look beautiful. (CINDERELLA EXITS MOCK-GRANDLY)

BUTTONS: That shouldn't take long.

(AS THE CURTAIN CLOSES, PRINCE CHARMING CROSSES STAGE, SPOTTING CINDERELLA AND BUTTONS. FRONT OF CURTAIN)

SCENE SEVEN

PRINCE CHARMING: Who was that? Anyway. Where are my worthy assistants? What are they called? Is it Fruit and Nut?

(SMARTIE PANTS AND CRUNCHIE FALL ONTO STAGE)

SMARTIE PANTS: You Majesty. How goes it?

PRINCE CHARMING: 'A pace' as they say in films about this sort of thing.

CRUNCHIE: Do they?

SMARTIE PANTS: If his Principality says so. Yes.

PRINCE CHARMING: How goes the invitation delivery?

SMARTIE PANTS: Nearly finished! We've worked night and day and there's only a handful left. Get them Crunchie old love.

(CRUNCHIE RUNS OFF AND DRAGS BACK AN ENORMOUS SACK MARKED 'VERY ROYAL MALE')

PRINCE CHARMING: Heavens. How many eligible young ladies are coming to this bash?

SMARTIE PANTS: Enough to keep you out of mischief.

CRUNCHIE: Or *in* mischief.

PRINCE CHARMING: Silence. Now have you given all these townsfolk an invitation? (GESTURES TO AUDIENCE)

SMARTIE PANTS: (STARES FOR A LONG TIME - COUNTS ON FINGERS. POINTS HERE AND THERE) No.

CRUNCHIE: Maybe they should pass a test of some sort before they're invited.

(LOOKS HARD AT AUDIENCE) They're all pretty enough. Apart from . . . (POINTS)

PRINCE CHARMING: What sort of test. An intelligence test?

SMARTIE PANTS: No. (STARES AGAIN) We want *someone* to be there. I know!

Let's do a trick, and if anyone can see how we do it, they can have an invitation to the ball.

PRINCE CHARMING: Yes! And they can come up here and whisper how it's done.

(CRUNCHIE PRODUCES A PACK OF CARDS. TAKES ONE OUT AND HOLDS IT BACK UP TO THE AUDIENCE)

PRINCE CHARMING: This is excellent! Now. *What* is that card?

(AUDIENCE HOPEFULLY SHOUTS OUT)

SMARTIE PANTS: They're no good. Let's forget it.

PRINCE CHARMING/CRUNCHIE: OK.

(BUTTONS WANDERS ON)

SMARTIE PANTS: Here's one. Er . . . young man . . .

BUTTONS: Me?

SMARTIE PANTS: Pass this simple intelligence test and win tickets to the Royal ball of the Millennium. A ball that will stand the test of time . . . be written about in books for centuries to come . . . be made into cartoon films . . . plays . . .

PRINCE CHARMING: Get on with it.

SMARTIE PANTS: Sorry. Take a card. (BUTTON TAKES IT) What is it?

BUTTONS: The 9 of Diamonds.
SMARTIE PANTS/CRUNCHIE/PRINCE CHARMING: Amazing!
BUTTONS: Can I have another go?
SMARTIE PANTS: For *two* invitations?
BUTTONS: OK. (SMARTIE PANTS GIVES HIM ANOTHER CARD - BUTTONS LOOKS AT IT CAREFULLY) Six of spades.
SMARTIE PANTS/CRUNCHIE/PRINCE CHARMING: Wow!
SMARTIE PANTS: Go for three? How do you do it?
PRINCE CHARMING: (QUIETLY) Shuffle them thoroughly.
SMARTIE PANTS: (HOLDS ONE UP) Is this the King of Hearts?
BUTTONS: It is!
PRINCE CHARMING: Incredible! You have won three tickets to my ball! (TURNS TO AUDIENCE) You see! Why couldn't you have done that? (THROWS SOME SWEETS INTO THE AUDIENCE) Sorry madam. Does it hurt?
SMARTIE PANTS: (PROUDLY TO BUTTONS) And here are your invitations . . . for the three girlies in your household. Where is that? So we don't deliver other invitations to you by mistake.
BUTTONS: Hardcentre Hall.
PRINCE CHARMING: Oh no.
BUTTONS: Pardon.
PRINCE CHARMING: Nothing. Come on lads, I have to rehearse my long boring speech and my tap dance.

(PRINCE CHARMING, CRUNCHIE AND SMARTIE PANTS BEGIN TO EXIT)

SMARTIE PANTS: Certainly Sir. Can we have dinner at the Palace afterwards?
PRINCE CHARMING: Well, all right.
SMARTIE PANTS: It's just that I miss my wife's cooking . . . as often as I can.

(BUTTONS IS ON HIS OWN)

BUTTONS: Three invitations! One for Cinderella and . . . I suppose I'd better give the other two to the sisters from hell. Otherwise they'll ruin Cinderella's evening. Who knows? She may meet the Prince. (CONSIDERS) She may fall in love with the Prince. (CONSIDERS MORE) The Prince may fall in love with *her*. (CONSIDERS EVEN MORE) Oh dear.

(AS AAAHS COME FROM THE AUDIENCE BUTTONS EXITS DROPPING ONE INVITATION AS HE GOES. BARON HARDCENTRE ENTERS - HE TOTTERS ACROSS THE STAGE AND NOTICES THE INVITATION)

BARON HARDCENTRE: I say. What's this? A plot point? What? I don't understand. (TRIES TO FOCUS - TAKES OUT MAGNIFYING GLASS) I can't read it. Looks like a business card. Maybe an advertisement for a builder . . . or a plumber. (PEERS AT CARD) Ball . . . could be short for ballcock. Certainly could be for a plumber. What can it be? Do you know?
(AUDIENCE: INVITATION) Eh? Can't hear you? (LOUDER; INVITATION) Sing a song? All right. Will you help me out in the choruses?

(SINGS VERY WELL KNOWN SONG. AUDIENCE JOIN IN)

SONG FIVE

You *could* have joined in. Helped out a bit. I'll keep this business card for later. Never know when you'll need a plumber. That's what it is isn't it? (AUDIENCE: NO. BARON HARDCENTRE POCKETS INVITATION) I thought so. It'll be safe with me. Next time someone wants some help with a song I'll tell them not to ask you. Useless. Must go. Where's um . . . Snow White? . . . No . . . Jack and the . . . er . . . Do I live here? Hello.

(BARON HARDCENTRE WANDERS OFF)

SCENE EIGHT

(THE CURTAINS OPEN TO A LUXURIOUS ROOM AT BARON HARDCENTRE'S HOUSE. STARBURST AND TWIXY ARE SHOWING OFF THEIR FINERY - AS CINDERELLA TRIES TO HELP OUT. THE BARONESS OVERSEES THE WHOLE THING)

STARBURST: What do you think Mumsy? How do I look? Am I your Dolly Mixture or what?

TWIXY: You look a shambles dear. What man would try and pick *you* up . . . unless he was a fork lift truck driver?

STARBURST: (CRIES) Mumsy, did you hear that?

BARONESS: I most certainly did. Cinderella - stop encouraging Twixy to be so rude.

CINDERELLA: Eh?

STARBURST: (TURNS ANGRILY) Yes you did. Because you're jealous of my beauty - but the truth is, I'm all milk chocolatey . . .

BARONESS: And you're plain.

CINDERELLA: Am I really? What can I do?

STARBURST/TWIXY: Do? You can fix this bow for a start. (START ROUTINE)

Work until the morning to sew on stars . .

TWIXY: And decorate her knickers with some Bounty Bars. Embroider pretty daisies on -

STARBURST : . . . her ample chest. Paint a skull and crossbones

TWIXY: on her brand new vest.

STARDUST: You can tidy up the bedroom with a feather duster . . .

TWIXY: Pad her great big bra out with some Peanut Cluster.

STARBURST: Clean the floor and wash the dishes . . .

TWIXY: Clean out the loo. Take out all the fishes . . .

(THEY PAUSE)

STARBURST: Take out all the fishes?

TWIXY: Well. It rhymed.

STARBURST: There aren't any fishes in our loo.

TWIXY: I *know* there aren't but I was trying to make it rhyme.

STARBURST: But it doesn't make sense.

TWIXIE: Does it really matter? (TURNS TO CINDERELLA) This is your fault.

(SLAPS HER)

CINDERELLA: I'm sorry.

TWIXY: Stupid girl. If I had a horse whip . . .

STARBURST: Upsetting my sister? Go to your room.

CINDERELLA: I haven't got a room.

STARBURST: Well. Get one.

CINDERELLA: But . . .

TWIXY: Silence. Mummy - send for . . .

STARBURST: Not . . .

BARONESS: Yes . . .

CINDERELLA: Oh no. Please.

TWIXY: Yes. Send for . . . Gobstopper. (SHE HITS A GONG. NOTHING HAPPENS)

CINDERELLA: Please. No . . . I beg of you. (CACKLES FROM SISTERS) I'll do anything . . . but please. Not . . . not . . . Gobstopper.

(INSANE LAUGHTER FROM BARONESS AND SISTERS)

TWIXY: Where's it got to? (BANGS GONG AGAIN) You must be *punished*. Where's Gobstopper?

(CINDERELLA FALLS TO HER KNEES. THERE ARE HEAVY FOOTSTEPS OFF. LIGHTS FLICKER. THE DOOR OPENS SLOWLY. IT'S BUTTONS)

TWIXY: Oh. It's you.

(THEY CARRY ON AS IF NOTHING HAS HAPPENED)

CINDERELLA: Oh Buttons.

STARBURST/TWIXY: (MOCKING) Chocolate Buttons.

BUTTONS: (TO AUDIENCE) See? (TO SISTERS) Who were you expecting?

BARONESS: Um . . . no one. What do you want?

BUTTONS: I come with news from the Palace . . . and *three* invitations.

CINDERELLA: Three?

BUTTONS: Three! Direct from the Prince to . . . (PRODUCES CARD FROM POCKET) Miss Starburst Hardcentre . . . (THEATRICALY PRODUCES SECOND CARD) . . . Miss Twixy Hardcentre . . . *and* . . . (GROPES AROUND IN POCKET . . . CAN'T FIND THE THIRD CARD) and . . . one for Miss Cinderella Hardcentre . . . um . . .

STARBURST: *What?*

BUTTONS: I had three. Honest. Give me one of those back.

(BUTTONS TRIES TO GRAB ONE OF THE INVITATIONS. TOO LATE)

TWIXY: Get off. Anyway, why would *she* need one?

BUTTONS: It was right here. I was given it by the Prince's henchmen.

BARONESS: Nonsense.

BUTTONS: It's true. It must be here somewhere. Cinderella - you have been invited to the ball.

(SISTERS READ CARDS FOR THE FIRST TIME)

STARBURST: (PREENING) A ball? I say. I'll grab a man - and I won't let him go until he kisses me enormously.

TWIXY: A ball? I'll eat everything. Then I'll . . . burp . . . then I'll grab a man and dance with him . . . Snakey . . . like this (SHE WRITHES AROUND) . . . Then I'll marry him.

BARONESS: Not just *any* man though girls. Think of who'll be there!

STARBURST: Who?
BARONESS: At the Prince's Ball?
STARBURST: Can't get it. Who?
BARONESS: The Prince maybe?
STARBURST/TWIXY: The Prince! He's mine.
TWIXY: Mine.
STARBURST: Mine.
TWIXY: (GIVES STARBURST AN ARM LOCK) Mine.
CINDERELLA: What about me?
STARBURST/TWIXY: You? (THEY COLLAPSE IN LAUGHTER)
STARBURST: What would you wear?
TWIXY: To cover your horrible little figure?
(SISTER'S ROUTINE)
STARBURST: What would you do . . .
TWIXY: To your mousy hair?
STARBURST: What would say . . .
TWIXY: If he said how do you do?
STARBURST: How would you handle . . .
TWIXY: The whole affair?
STARBURST: How would you cope . . .
TWIXY: If he tried to talk to you?
STARBURST: Let alone . . .
TWIXY: If he said let's dance . . .
STARBURST: So let's face it.
TWIXY: Cinderella.
BARONESS: When it come to the ball, baby . . .
ALL: You've got *no chance*.

(CINDERELLA CRIES AND SITS DOWN)

BARONESS: Come on my darlings. Let's go and make plans. This is all too depressing. Silence Cinderella, or I'll slap you one.
STARBURST: Oh, do it Mumsy.
TWIXY: For us.
BARONESS: Ball indeed. The Prince is obviously taking a lot of trouble to make his ball just the thing. He doesn't want it untidied by having a dismal little wretch like you around.
The very idea.
Go and clean out the fire, wash the dishes, dust the Hoover, polish the dustbin,
(FADES OUT AS THE THREE EXIT) hit the mice, polish the Baron, spray the drive, clip the hedge. Clip yourself.

(BUTTONS AND CINDERELLA LEFT ALONE - BUTTONS PRODUCES A BAG OF SWEETS. OFFERS THEM)

CINDERELLA: No thanks Buttons. Oh. What am I to do? I want a bit of fun too. My sisters are always going out, doing the town. What do I do? Nothing. I'm never invited anywhere.
BUTTONS: Cinderella - you *were* invited to the Prince's Ball. I just lost the invitation, that's all.

CINDERELLA: Great. But still, they're right. I'm far too ugly to go to a fine ball like that. All the guests would laugh, and I wouldn't know what to do, what to say. And dance? I'd probably fall over during the introduction. Or step on someone's foot . . . or head.

BUTTONS: What *are* you talking about? You're the prettiest thing in Sweetieland. Haven't you seen the way the boys in the market look at you?

CINDERELLA: They're only laughing at me. They say silly things like 'Hi gorgeous' or 'give us a kiss . . .' or . . .

BUTTONS: My love . . .

CINDERELLA: Yes, thing's like that. They're just being nasty.

BUTTONS: My love . . .

CINDERELLA: I heard you, Buttons.

BUTTONS: No. I was going to say . . . (HE LOOKS LONGINGLY AT

CINDERELLA) Oh never mind.

CINDERELLA: (OBLIVIOUS) If only a man would walk into my life. He doesn't have to be a prince. Or a rich man. As long as he loved me and I loved him. It would all be so simple, and I could leave this dreadful place and those silly (BUILDS UP) Cows . . .

BUTTONS: (SHOCKED) Cinderella. Steady. Cinderella . . . um . . . come away with me, I could be the man you love. I'll look after you (FALLS TO HIS KNEES) I'll protect you and work hard for you. What do you say?

CINDERELLA: (GIGGLES) Oh Buttons. Always joking! You make me feel so much better - always! Why can't I find a man like you?

BUTTONS: But . . .

CINDERELLA: Thank you Buttons - you've cheered me up! Who needs a silly man around?

BUTTONS: But . . .

CINDERELLA: But I wonder what you did do with my invitation? Dropped it probably. Or . . .

BUTTONS: Yes?

CINDERELLA: Or you threw it away because you didn't want to embarrass me. Did you? Because it's not possible for me to look nice is it . . . (SAD) and no one would want to be with me . . . and I'd just make the Palace look untidy.

BUTTONS: (GRABS HER HAND) Cinderella - you're a princess . . . a painting of a princess that just needs some final touches to perfect her before she goes on show. That's what you are! Dance?

SONG SIX

(BUTTONS LEAPS TO HIS FEET AND GRABS CINDERELLA. AS THEY WHIRL ROUND TO STRING INSTRUMENTAL, THE LIGHTS CHANGE AND SHADOWS OF VIOLINISTS PLAY ON THE BACKGROUND. AT THE END OF THE DANCE THEY NEARLY KISS, AND THEN DRIFT AWAY FROM EACH OTHER. LIGHTS FADE. CURTAINS CLOSE SLOWLY)

SCENE NINE

(STARBURST AND TWIXY CARRY ON A SELF-STANDING MIRROR)

STARBURST: (STARING INTO MIRROR) Have you ever seen anything so lovely?

TWIXY: (UNAWARE STARBURST IS LOOKING AT HERSELF) Well, that is so kind of you. I do look rather fantastic don't I? I think it's my figure.

STARBURST: Yes. I've heard men referring to your figure when we walk through the market.
TWIXY: Have you by jove?
STARBURST: Yes. The other day, I distinctly heard one say . . . 'What a figure.'
TWIXY: Really?
STARBURST: Yes. 'What a figure. Last time I saw a figure like that . . .'
TWIXY: Yes.
STARBURST: Richard Branson was sitting in a basket underneath it.
TWIXY: How complimentary!
STARBURST: (STUDIES REFLECTION) You know, dear?
TWIXY: Yes.
STARBURST: I've got a very pretty nose.
TWIXY: The other day, I distinctly heard a man in the market say 'What a pretty nose . . .'
STARBURST: Did you?
TWIXY: He said, 'The last time I saw a nose like that . . . it was taking off at London airport.'
STARBURST: Did he? He obviously fancies me rotten. Show me which one he is, and I'll let him play with my afflictions. (CRIES OF STAGE) Script! (BROUGHT ON BY SOMEBODY - STARBURST STUDIES IT) I'll let him play with my afflictions.
TWIXY: Careful dear. You know what men are like.

SONG SEVEN

STARBURST: (GRINS ENORMOUSLY) Oh yes! (MOOD CHANGES) Twixy dear . . .
TWIXY: Yes?
STARBURST: You know that thing that hangs about the house. That gadget that's designed to tackle the jobs that humans don't like . . .
TWIXY: The Hoover?
STARBURST: No dear.
TWIXY: Cinderella you mean?
STARBURST: Yes. Well I've got an idea. You know how she was interested in going to the ball . . .
BOTH: Going to the ball!
TWIXY: Yes?
STARBURST: Well . . . (WHISPERS AT LENGTH TO TWIXY, WHO LOOKS EXCITED) Off you go.

(TWIXY EXITS AND COMES BACK WITH A DRESSMAKERS DUMMY AND SOME OLD RAGS, RIBBONS AND BOWS)

STARBURST: Perfect. This could go over here. A bow here . . .
TWIXY: A nice big sash here . . .

(ETC. THEY CONSTRUCT A HORRENDOUS DRESS. FINALLY . . .
STARBURST EMBRACES THE DUMMY)

STARBURST: Oh Cinderella. You *will* go to the ball!

(ROARING WITH LAUGHTER, THEY WHEEL THE DUMMY OFF AS THE LIGHTS FADE)

SCENE TEN

(CURTAINS OPEN TO KITCHEN. CINDERELLA ALONE BY THE FIRE)

SONG EIGHT

(BARONESS ENTERS)

BARONESS: Oh shutup. Why aren't you helping the girls for heaven's sake? It's the ball tonight. The ball. Don't you remember? Ball. Ball. Ball.

CINDERELLA: I know. Er . . . Mother. I can see that I'm not as pretty as my sisters.

BARONESS: Don't call me Mother. You know it makes me feel sick.

CINDERELLA: Sorry. You see, I know I'm not as pretty as my sisters but . . .

BARONESS: Or clever . . .

CINDERELLA: Not as pretty or clever as my sisters but . . .

BARONESS: Or talented . . .

CINDERELLA: Not. I'm not as pretty, clever or talented as my sisters, but couldn't I .

. . .

BARONESS: Or desirable . . .

CINDERELLA: No. You're right. I'm not as pretty, clever, talented or desirable as my sisters . . .

BARONESS: So what's your problem?

CINDERELLA: But can't I . . . Oh, nothing.

BARONESS: Good. So that's settled. Happy to help.

CINDERELLA: I wish I had an invitation.

BARONESS: Silence. Now - where are my girlies? (COVERS EYES) Come on out! Show Mumsy! I've got my eyes shut! (BARON ENTERS. BARONESS UNCOVERS HER EYES) What are you doing here?

BARON: Eh?

BARONESS: What . . . are . . . you . . . doing . . . here?

BARON: Eh?

BARONESS: Here.

BARON: No I can't.

BARONESS: Go away. Go to bed. Cinderella will be up soon to read you a story.

BARON: Oh good!

BARONESS: You heard that, didn't you.

BARON: No. I was replying to something you said earlier.

BARONESS: So you didn't hear the last thing I said.

BARON: Oh yes.

BARONESS: So how did you hear that?

BARON: What?

BARONESS: About Cinderella.

BARON: Salmonella? (TURNS TO GO. TURNS BACK) Oh, by the way, guess what I found in the street today . . .

BARONESS: A hedgehog? The Eiffel Tower? An ocean liner made completely from icing sugar?

BARON: Don't answer then. I found a card . . .

BARONESS: How interesting.

BARON: (TRIES TO FIND CARD) What was it now? (TURNS TO AUDIENCE) What was it? If anyone could tell me, I would be most grateful. A sort of card . . . (SEARCHES) Where is it? What is it? (HOPEFULLY AUDIENCE RESPONDS) No, don't be shy. Say something (AUDIENCE LOUDER) Well, if you're not going to help I think I'll go to bed. Is it morning? Where am I? (WANDERS VAGUELY OFF AND RETURNS) Hello. (GOES)

BARONESS: If only we lived somewhere sensible, and not in the thirteenth century, then I swear to you . . . I would get him a doctor. Maybe two.

CINDERELLA: Can I just ask you one favour, and I promise I'll never ask for another thing.

BARONESS: Well?

CINDERELLA: Can I . . . could I . . . could I possibly . . . please, please . . . go to the ball?

BARONESS: (GRINS ENORMOUSLY) The ball? Of course my dear! (CLAPS HANDS) Girls! Cinderella is going to the ball with you! Come along!

(ROLL OF DRUMS. THE UGLY SISTERS ENTER, CARRYING THE DRESS THEY HAVE MADE)

STARBURST: Shut your eyes Cinderella!

TWIXY: Surprise time!

CINDERELLA: (COVERS HER EYES) Can I look yet?

STARBURST/TWIXY: (THEY HOLD UP THE DRESS) Open up!

CINDERELLA: (SHE SEES THE DRESS AND IS TAKEN ABACK. SHE CARRIES BRAVELY ON) For me? But it's beautiful! Can I try it on?

STARBURST: Try away. Come through here and I'll help you slip it on.

(STARBURST AND CINDERELLA EXIT)

TWIXY: He.

BARONESS: He he.

TWIXY: He he he . . .

BARONESS: He he he he . . .

TWIXY: Pity cameras haven't been invented yet.

BARONESS (SARCASTICALLY) Won't she look lovely? I'm getting ready to be terribly proud . . .

TWIXY: And jealous. Shh. Here they come.

(CINDERELLA ENTERS, LOOKING PRETTY BAD IN HER DRESS. SISTERS FEIGN ENTHUSIASM)

STARBURST: Meet the Princess!

TWIXY: I think I could swoon. How could *I* go to the ball with such a beauty?

CINDERELLA: Do I really look . . . ?

BARONESS: Ravishing dear. Lovely. Your coach will be here any time now.

STARBURST: Just in time for a little make up . . .

TWIXY: . . . and plastic surgery.

CINDERELLA: Oh. Does this mean I can go to the ball? Do I really look good enough?

(BUTTONS ENTERS)

CINDERELLA: Buttons! How do I look?

BUTTONS: (SHOCKED) Cinderella. What have they done to you? (TURNS ANGRILY) What have you done to her?

(THE SISTERS GIGGLE INNOCENTLY. THE BARONESS AFFRONTED)

BARONESS: Who do you think you're talking to, you boot black? How dare you. Cinderella. Take off that ridiculous rag and get back to work. The nearest you'll get to the Prince's ball is to help my two dear little daughters get ready. And that you'll do now. You useless, ugly child. Remember your position in this house. And wash your hands before you touch my dear girls. Get on. *Now*. And you . . . (TO BUTTONS) Go and polish the coach again. It may have got dusty in the last five minutes. (TO CINDERELLA) The only time you'll get to a ball is in a football match for idiots. Get back to work!

(BARONESS STORMS OUT. BUTTONS LOOKS AT CINDERELLA, WHO INDICATES THAT HE SHOULD LEAVE. HE DOES. SHE STARTS TO CRY BY THE FIRE AS THE LIGHTS FADE)

SCENE ELEVEN

(AS THE CURTAINS CLOSE SMARTIE PANTS AND CRUNCHIE WALK ON)

SMARTIE PANTS: Have you done everything I told you to do? Is everything ready for the ball?

CRUNCHIE: (UNCERTAIN) I think so.

SMARTIE PANTS: The band? (CRUNCHIE PRODUCES RUBBER BAND - SMARTIE PANTS HITS HIM) The food? (CRUNCHIE PRODUCES McDONALDS CONTAINER) Fool. Oh, what are we going to do? Nothing's ready and the damn thing's meant to start in an hour. Five hundred people to be fed. Fine coaches arriving. Beautiful girls in lovely dresses. Dancing. Singing. That Prince thinks he can snap his fingers and it will all happen.

CRUNCHIE: I'd like to snap his fingers. How *do* you pick up girls?

SMARTIE PANTS: You have to bend your knees or you'll do your back in.

CRUNCHIE: Is that right? I never knew that.

SMARTIE PANTS: You . . . (PRODS HIM) are about the stupidest person in the land. You know nothing.

CRUNCHIE: How dare you? I could be on one of those quiz shows and win easily.

SMARTIE PANTS: You wouldn't even get your name right.

CRUNCHIE: Try me then. Go on. Go on.

SMARTIE PANTS: I don't know any questions.

CRUNCHIE: Ah! I see. So who's smart now?

SMARTIE PANTS: (THINKS) All right. I know. Get a chair. (CRUNCHIE GETS A CHAIR AND SITS DOWN) Right. Here goes. Name?

CRUNCHIE: Pass.

SMARTIE PANTS: What's the first letter of the alphabet?

CRUNCHIE: Eh?

SMARTIE PANTS: Correct. Who invented the steam powered locomotive?

CRUNCHIE: What?

SMARTIE PANTS: Right. What's the name of a man who eats other people?

CRUNCHIE: I canna. . .think. . .

SMARTIE PANTS: No. A cannibal. Good try. Now a historical TV question. At what time did they have the News at Ten?

CRUNCHIE: Pass. Can I go now? My brain's full.

SMARTIE PANTS: No. What's a silver spoon made of?

CRUNCHIE: Pass.

SMARTIE PANTS: It's in the Hindu Kush mountains between Afghanistan and Pakistan. (CRUNCHIE LOOKS UTTERLY BEWILDERED) It's the Kyber . . .

CRUNCHIE: Pass.

SMARTIE PANTS: Correct!

CRUNCHIE: And you called me an idiot! What would you call me if I told you I had ten 'A' levels?

SMARTIE PANTS: A liar.

(THEY SING A SILLY SONG)

SONG NINE

(THEY EXIT. LIGHTS FADE)

SCENE TWELVE

(CURTAIN OPENS TO KITCHEN. CINDERELLA STILL SITTING IN THE SAME PLACE. CRUNCHIE RUNS ON BRIEFLY)

CRUNCHIE: One hour later. (EXITS)

CINDERELLA: This is the worst evening of my life. I have never felt so sad. It couldn't get worse. (SISTERS VOICES OFF 'CINDERELLA') It has got worse.

(TWIXY ENTERS IN HER FINERY)

TWIXY: How do I look?

CINDERELLA: Er . . .

TWIXY: Lost for words. I look brilliant? Like a princess? I look like a million dollars?

CINDERELLA: (ASIDE) In loose change. . .

TWIXY: Pardon?

CINDERELLA: I er . . . said I look strange.

TWIXY: You certainly do. (BELLOWS) Starburst!

(STARBURST ENTERS IN A TERRIBLE DRESS)

STARBURST: Here I am. I call this my fruit pastille number.

TWIXY: The family size bag.

STARBURST: You wait . . . wait until the Prince sees *me*. He won't be able to resist a nibble. He'll come waltzing over to me and say . . .

TWIXY: Where's your sister, fatty?

STARBURST: Well. I've heard he likes a girl with a bit of sugar coating. Not an old liquorice stick like you.

CINDERELLA: I think you both look . . . um . . . lovely. But you should be going or you'll miss . . . (SOBS) all the fun.

TWIXY: Oh Cinderella. Come with us . . .

STARBURST: Oh do.

CINDERELLA: Can I . . . ?

STARBURST: Oh of course. Come with us.

(CINDERELLA HOPEFUL)

TWIXY: To the *door*. You can make sure my beautiful gown doesn't snag on the door frame. We'll be late back and probably starving. Have supper ready for me . . .

STARBURST: And me . . .

TWIXY: and probably the Prince. Oh! It will be a wonderful evening. I can feel it right here.

STARBURST: That's wind. Come on.

CINDERELLA: Please, please let me come with you. I'll stay in the background and not embarrass you with my awkward ways.

STARBURST: Your ugliness you mean. The Prince has gone to a great deal of trouble to get the most beautiful people of the land together for a bash. The last thing he needs is an ugly little toerag like you. Goodbye.

(TWIXY AND STARBURST FLOUNCE AWAY TO BOOS. TWIXY TURNS BACK, LOOKS AT AUDIENCE)

TWIXY: Oh shutup.

(CINDERELLA ALONE. THERE IS A LONG PAUSE, AND THEN A MOMENTARY GLOW FROM OFF-STAGE. SHE LOOKS UP)

CINDERELLA: Hello? Is anyone there?

(ANOTHER GLOW. CINDERELLA STANDS AND CROSSES TOWARDS DOOR EXIT. ONE MORE GLOW. SHE STANDS, TRANSFIXED. SUDDENLY SHE IS BATHED IN WHITE LIGHT, FILLED WITH WISPS OF GLITTER. ENTER THE FAIRY GODMOTHER)

CINDERELLA: Who . . . who are you?

FAIRY GODMOTHER: Sweet. They always say that. (TO AUDIENCE) Have you noticed that?

CINDERELLA: You look . . . lovely. But the ball's not here. It's at the Palace . . . third turning on the right past Sweetietown Market and up the hill.

FAIRY GODMOTHER: I'm not going to the ball, my dear. *I'm* not.

CINDERELLA: Oh. Then it's very sad that you have turned up here, only to see the plainest, ugliest, most miserable girl in the land.

FAIRY GODMOTHER: Miserable maybe . . . but plain? Ugly? Where did you get an idea like that? (STARTS FIDGETING) These wings are killing me. Could you have a look?

CINDERELLA: Wings? (FAIRY GODMOTHER TURNS ROUND) Oh, wings. I don't want to bend them or anything. They look a bit breakable.

FAIRY GODMOTHER: Breakable? I'll have you know my girl, these wings have been through fire and ice. Wind and water. Snow and stuff. And that was only since lunchtime. Give 'em a good yank.

CINDERELLA: Are you sure? Here goes . . . (SHE TWISTS THEM VIOLENTLY)

FAIRY GODMOTHER: Ah! Better! You should have been an osteopath. I'm sorry. I've been to 1999 today. They're all on about that sort of thing there. That and the Millennium . . . and computers.

CINDERELLA: What language are you speaking?

FAIRY GODMOTHER: Advanced rhubarb. Forget it. (WAVES WAND) Onwards.

CINDERELLA: So you're not going to the ball? Even with your wings straight?

FAIRY GODMOTHER: *I'm* not.

CINDERELLA: You've said that before. Tell me what you mean. And while you're at it, tell me (A) how you got in (B) why you've come to see me and (C) why me? When I have two beautiful sisters.

FAIRY GODMOTHER: You Cinderella. . .

CINDERELLA: You know my name . . .

FAIRY GODMOTHER: You, Cinderella, are a diamond in the rough. Your sisters are a couple of right pillocks. What is your greatest dream at the moment? What would you most like to do now?

CINDERELLA: I'd like to . . . I'd like to . . . have finished all my housework so I could rest.

FAIRY GODMOTHER: Come come, child. Be a bit more ambitious. What would you *love* to do?

CINDERELLA: I . . . I would love to go to the ball! (EXCITED) I would love to dance, and chat, and meet the Prince! And . . . (FLOPS) But even if I did, I haven't got a thing to wear. Who are you? Another cruel joke sent to me by my horrible sisters?

FAIRY GODMOTHER: Certainly not. What a cheek. I am your Fairy Godmother!

CINDERELLA: And I'm a great big packet of M & M's. Talk sense.

FAIRY GODMOTHER: (GOES SILENT. WALKS SLOWLY OVER TO THE AUDIENCE AND WHISPERS) Will you tell her? After three, shout "She's your Fairy Godmother" OK? Let's try it.

(CINDERELLA JUST SITS THERE. HEARS NOTHING. THE AUDIENCE TRY AGAIN. ON THE THIRD TRY THERE IS A GREAT FLASH, CINDERELLA WHIRLS OFF STAGE AND COMES BACK IN BALL DRESS)

CINDERELLA: What happened? (SHE LOOKS DOWN) This . . . this is impossible. My dress . .

FAIRY GODMOTHER: So who's your Fairy Godmother?

CINDERELLA: Er . . . you are. Thank you. Thank you!

FAIRY GODMOTHER: We haven't started yet. (SHE WAVES HER WAND AND FOUR SMALL MICE DANCE ON WITH RIBBONS AND FLOWERS)

Ah. Cedric. Peabody. Sniffles and Claire.

Better do something about her hair . . .

(FAIRY GODMOTHER DANCES ABOUT. DIRECTIONAL LIGHT AND SPARKLES ON HER AS THE MICE DANCE AROUND CINDERELLA. THE LIGHTS FADE FROM CINDERELLA AS THE FAIRY GODMOTHER GETS THE ATTENTION. SHE SINGS A CHORUS)

SONG TEN

(CINDERELLA: HAIR IS NOW COMPLETE - SHE LOOKS WONDERFUL)

FAIRY GODMOTHER: Not bad at all. Not bad at all. And now you're going . . . to the ball!

CINDERELLA: The ball? Me?
 It cannot be . . .

FAIRY GODMOTHER: Don't let's do any more rhyming for a bit dear . . . it's wearing . . .

CINDERELLA: To the ball? But how do I get there?

FAIRY GODMOTHER: By . . . pumpkin!

CINDERELLA: What?

FAIRY GODMOTHER: Get a pumpkin, child. Hurry now.

CINDERELLA: Wouldn't you rather have some chocolate? A jelly baby? I've got a Malteser somewhere.

FAIRY GODMOTHER: A pumpkin will be fine.

CINDERELLA: Suit yourself. Today is turning out to be really weird.

(CINDERELLA RUNS OFF AND BRINGS THE PUMPKIN. THE FAIRY GODMOTHER WAVES HER WAND. AS MUSIC BUILDS, THE WHOLE SEQUENCE TURNS TO UV LIGHT. THE COACH APPEARS FROM A FLOOR MOUNTED CUTOUT FLAP, AND HORSES MOVE BY CUTOUTS AND HUMAN MOVEMENT TO PRODUCE A SIMPLE FORM OF ANIMATION. AS THIS 'LOOPEd' MOVEMENT CONTINUES, THE FAIRY GODMOTHER HELPS CINDERELLA INTO THE COACH. UV PAINTED TREES CROSS BEHIND THE COACH TO GIVE THE IMPRESSION THAT IT IS TRAVELLING. THE FAIRY GODMOTHER BACKS OFF TO ADD TO THE ILLUSION OF MOVEMENT. SHE CALLS OUT . . .)

FAIRY GODMOTHER: Remember, Cinderella. You must leave the ball before midnight or . . .

CINDERELLA: I . . . I can't hear you . . . Thank you . . . Thank you . . .

(AS THE MUSIC BUILDS THE LIGHTS FADE AWAY AND . . . CURTAIN)

ACT TWO - SCENE ONE

(THE ACT OPENS FRONT OF CURTAIN. SMARTIE PANTS AND CRUNCHIE ENTER. THEY ARE DRESSED FOR THE BALL. CRUNCHIE IS IN DRAG)

CRUNCHIE: I've only got one question. Why?

SMARTIE PANTS: I was so busy getting ready for tonight, I didn't have time to find a bird.

CRUNCHIE: I've never felt so embarrassed.

SMARTIE PANTS: Don't be silly. Nobody will know it's you and . . .

CRUNCHIE: What?

SMARTIE PANTS: You don't look bad. Can I have the next dance?

CRUNCHIE: Leave it out. I can't take any more of this. I'm going to Sydney, Australia.

SMARTIE PANTS: Who's he? A pop singer? Cor. This tie's tight.

CRUNCHIE: Should have got a bigger one. Now. Down to business. Are you sure you gave out all the invitations? The Prince will go mad if we've missed anyone.
SMARTIE PANTS: Of course I did. But will he *ever* find a princess? It seems impossible sometimes.
CRUNCHIE: Even a blind elephant finds a bun occasionally.
SMARTIE PANTS: Very profound.
CRUNCHIE: Thank you. And you always say I'm so thick.
SMARTIE PANTS: Oh come on, don't let's have a row tonight. I want you to be the perfect partner at the ball.
CRUNCHIE: But I'm a bloke.
SMARTIE PANTS: Nobody need know.
CRUNCHIE: But what if I meet someone . . . and fall . . .
SMARTIE PANTS: In the soup?
CRUNCHIE: In love.
SMARTIE PANTS: That won't happen. Trust me. Now. Let's go. I don't want you falling over anything. Have you got your glasses?
CRUNCHIE: No. I'll drink straight out of the bottle.

(THEY EXIT)

SCENE TWO

(THE CURTAIN OPENS TO A SET ROUTINE AT THE BALL. THE PRINCE ENTERS. THE TWO UGLY SISTERS ENTER AND WAVE. THE PRINCE LEAVES. SMARTIE PANTS AND CRUNCHIE WALTZ ACROSS. THE MUSIC BUILDS AS EVERYONE JOINS IN THE CHORUS)

SONG ELEVEN

(THE PRINCE ENTERS AGAIN. ALL THE GIRLS START WAVING AND GRINNING. LIGHT CONCENTRATES ON HIS CORNER OF THE STAGE AS HE BECKONS SMARTIE PANTS AND CRUNCHIE OVER)

PRINCE CHARMING: This is dreadful. I thought you had arranged for all the fair beauties of the land to be here tonight. I've got to get married soon - I can't go on enjoying myself all my life. But look at them . . . Lord Wrigley's daughter . . .
SMARTIE PANTS: But she's a juicy fruit.
PRINCE CHARMING: She's dreadful. And that girl Rolo . . . if she was the last one . . .
CRUNCHIE: There's Baron Hardcentre's girls. They're big and sort of . . . you know . . . a bit . . . well . . . eh? You know.
PRINCE CHARMING: Sorry miss?
CRUNCHIE: It's me! Crunchie!
PRINCE CHARMING: Pity. You're the best looking bit of crumpet here. Oh well. Onwards. I'd better dance with one of the Hardcentre girls I suppose. The things I do for my country.

(SMARTIE PANTS BRINGS THE TWO SISTERS OVER)

SMARTIE PANTS: Your Principality. Meet the lovely Lady Starburst Hardcentre.
PRINCE CHARMING: I know . . .

SMARTIE PANTS: And the equally delicious Lady Twixy . . .
PRINCE CHARMING: Do they come in the handy treat size?
CRUNCHIE: Only the giant family pack I'm afraid Sire.
PRINCE CHARMING: I know what's going to happen. We'll finally start having fun at midnight and then . . .
SMARTIE PANTS: (SHOCKED) No. No. Don't say it. Even in fun.
PRINCE CHARMING: Yes. It will happen . . .Gobstopper.
CRUNCHIE: Not . . . Gobstopper. (FX: ENORMOUS DOOMY CHORD)
PRINCE CHARMING: It will. Wait and see. Just my luck. And talking of luck, or the most incredible lack of it . . . dance, Miss Starburst?
STARBURST: (THRUSTS HERSELF AT THE PRINCE) *Rather!* Try and stop me - and if you think you can take hideous advantage of such a young innocent girl . . . you *can!* Let's twist. let's boogie. Let's do the funky fudge bar. You lead.
(SHE TWIRLS HIM ROUND TO THE STRAINS OF A TANGO. SHE THROWS HERSELF BACK, GRABS A FLOWER FROM THE HEADDRESS OF A PASSING GUEST AND STICKS IT IN HER MOUTH)
STARBURST: Gresh goog giss . . . geeky.
PRINCE CHARMING: I beg your pardon?
STARBURST: (REMOVES FLOWER) I said, give us a good kiss cheeky. (MUSIC STOPS) Oh.
PRINCE CHARMING: (PULLS HIMSELF AWAY) Well, thank you. That was um . . .
SMARTIE PANTS: (TO PRINCE) Delightful.
PRINCE CHARMING: Frightful.
SMARTIE PANTS: *Delightful* . . .
PRINCE CHARMING: Ah! Delightful.
TWIXY: My turn!
STARBURST: (PULLS TWIXY ASIDE) Don't bother dear. Can't you see what's happened? He's fallen for my charms . . . big time . . . and I'm ripe and ready for it.
TWIXY: Eh?
STARBURST: A proposal! Can't you see the look in his eyes? He's like a man possessed. I'll phone Mumsy and tell her the good news. She can put runway lights up the path in case he comes round. Oh happy day!
CRUNCHIE: (TO PRINCE) Go on.
PRINCE CHARMING: Must I?
CRUNCHIE: Go on . . .

(THE PRINCE TAKES TWIXY IN HIS ARMS. AS HE DOES, THE MUSIC LOSES ITS PACE AND THE LIGHTS FADE TO TWO SPOTLIT AREAS AS CINDERELLA ENTERS. TWIXY IS SPUN ROUND, AND FADES AWAY SLOWLY AS THE PRINCE SEES HIS LOVE FOR THE FIRST TIME. FOLLOW SPOTS BRING THEM TOGETHER AS STRING MUSIC BUILDS AND THEY MOVE SLOWLY INTO A GENTLE WALTZ. THE MOOD CHANGES AND CINDERELLA SHOWS THE CROWD A THING OR TWO ABOUT DANCING)

SONG TWELVE

(THE MOOD RETURNS TO ROMANCE, AND THE CROWD STANDS BACK AND OBSERVES FROM THE PRINCE AND CINDERELLA FROM THE SHADOWS. AS THEIR DANCE COMES TO AN END, THEY ARE ABOUT TO KISS WHEN A DISTANT CLOCK STRIKES TWELVE. CINDERELLA'S WIG COMES OFF IN HER HAND AS SHE BACKS AWAY FROM THE PRINCE)

CINDERELLA: The Fairy Godmother. She said something about midnight . . . (SHE RUNS OFF, DROPPING A SLIPPER. THE CROWD COMES BACK TO LIFE AS THE PRINCE STARES OFF. HE SLOWLY PICKS UP THE SLIPPER. THERE IS SILENCE, BROKEN BY . . .)

STARBURST: Who *on earth* was that?

TWIXY: I'm sure I've seen her before. Plain little thing . . .

SMARTIE PANTS: Cor. Don't remember inviting *her*.

CRUNCHIE: Was she prettier than me?

SMARTIE PANTS: My grandmother's parrot is prettier than you. But as I was saying . . . Cor.

TWIXY: (CALLS TO PRINCE) Er . . . Princey. Where were we? Just getting a bit fresh I seem to remember.

PRINCE CHARMING: (STILL IN A DAZE) The most beautiful girl I've ever seen . . .

TWIXY: Why thank you . . . (PREENS HERSELF)

STARBURST: Don't be stupid, he meant me.

PRINCE CHARMING: Who was that girl? Smartie Pants? Crunchie? *Anybody*? Who was that girl?

STARBURST: Girl? What girl?

PRINCE CHARMING: The girl that I held in my arms, danced with, caressed . . .

STARBURST: Oh. *That* girl.

PRINCE CHARMING: (DOWN ON ONE KNEE) The ball is over. The evening is over. Only time will tell if *life* is over. Everybody. I will give ten thousand pieces of silver to anyone who can find that girl. Ten *thousand*.

STARBURST: Ooh...er . . .

SMARTIE PANTS: Sir . . . Sir. Your Princesship.

PRINCE CHARMING: Are you still here? Get searching.

SMARTIE PANTS: Sir. You have her slipper. You should say whoever can balance that slipper on their nose . . .

CRUNCHIE: For three minutes . . .

SMARTIE PANTS: Can be your wife. How about that?

PRINCE CHARMING: I've got a better idea. Whoever this slipper *fits* will become my wife. My Princess. The mother of the future Royal family.

Everyone! Whomsoever this slipper fits will be my wife. I love her. Now get to it.

GUEST: But we won't have the slipper, your Highness. How will we know if we've found the right girl.

PRINCE CHARMING: Um . . . well . . . er . . . if you *think* you've found her, send for Smartie Pants here - and he'll come round with the slipper.

GUEST: Well, quite honestly Sir, I don't think that's practical. There are three hundred people here. Each one will know at least two eligible girls. That's six hundred . . . multiply that . . .

PRINCE CHARMING: Oh shutup. It will work. Let's get on with it. Everybody out.

(ALL THE GUESTS LEAVE AS THE LIGHTS FADE AND THE CURTAINS SLOWLY CLOSE)

SCENE THREE

(THE TWO UGLY SISTERS WALK TO FRONT OF CURTAIN AT THE LAST MOMENT. THEY ARE NOW ON THE WAY HOME)

TWIXY: He was talking about me of course.

STARBURST: Who?

TWIXY: The Prince. He was dancing with me when it all happened. I think that girl .

..

STARBURST: The plain one?

TWIXY: . . . Was what they call a figment of his imagination.

STARBURST: How do you mean, dear?

TWIXY: Well, when he was dancing with me he felt the mighty swell of love. A stirring deep in his loins - like all his hidden feelings had broken out . . .

STARBURST: Like spots?

TWIXY: A bit. And the girl wasn't there *at all!* It was *me* all the time! Everyone imagined it!

STARBURST: Twixy . . .

TWIXY: Yes . . .

STARBURST: Stop talking rubbish.

TWIXY: Oh.

STARBURST: She was there. She was *real* and now I feel terribly sad. (SHE SOBS FOR A LONG TIME - BUTTONS ENTERS)

TWIXY: It's Chocolate Buttons!

BUTTONS: (TO AUDIENCE) See? (TO SISTERS) What's the matter? The ball couldn't have ended already.

STARBURST/TWIXY: (BOTH WAILING) It has.

STARBURST: And the Prince has fallen for some stupid, skinny little bint instead of me . . .

TWIXIE: And even more surprisingly . . . *me*.

BUTTONS: (TO AUDIENCE) Skinny little bint? Who was it?

(AUDIENCE SHOUT OUT. BUTTONS CAN'T HEAR. HE'S JUST ABOUT TO FIND OUT WHEN STARBURST GRABS HIM)

STARBURST: She was so skinny, that if she'd sat cross legged, she would have looked like the pirate flag.

BUTTONS: Jolly Roger?

STARBURST: I don't think that was her name. Now - sing me a song to cheer me up. Now. Or I'll hit you with a broom.

BUTTONS: What sort?

STARBURST: A long handled broom.

BUTTONS: No. I meant what sort of *song*.

STARBURST: (CHEERS UP AND NUDGES HIM) Oh. Sorry chuck.

TWIXY: Sing that one you sang to us when we were children.

BUTTONS: But I'm younger than you.

STARBURST: Well, who was it then?

SONG THIRTEEN

(BUTTONS SINGS THE FIRST VERSE OF THE BIG AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION NUMBER. THE SISTERS JOIN IN. WORDS BROUGHT ON BY MICE ETC. FINALLY THEY ALL LEAVE. BARON HARCENRE WANDERS ON)

BARON: I didn't hear a thing. You lot should learn how to sing. Those people could have done with some help. You didn't even open your mouths, did you? (YELLS FROM AUDIENCE) Thought not.

(BARON WANDERS OFF)

SCENE FOUR

(THE CURTAIN HALF OPENS TO A BLACK BACKGROUND WITH A SINGLE GOLD CHAIR)

SONG FOURTEEN

(SMARTIE PANTS AND CRUNCHIE TRY THE SLIPPER ON A SUCCESSION OF GIRLS, EXITING RIGHT AND RE-ENTERING LEFT. NO LUCK. THE CURTAINS CLOSE)

SCENE FIVE

(PRINCE WALKS ON - FRONT OF CURTAIN)

PRINCE CHARMING: (SINGS) Love is a many splendored thing. (THINKS) What's love got to do with it, do with it. (CONSIDERS) When a man loves a woman (PACES) Loving you is easy 'cos you're beautiful. (AND) Love is strange, woe woe . . . (TALKS TO AUDIENCE) Even with my handpicked bodyguard, I seem to be no closer to finding my true love. Was it a dream? Well, was it? I thought not. I seemed to see her for a moment, and she was gone . . . (ROMANTICALLY) like the breath of a summer breeze. Or one of those bits of pizza you've been saving 'til last, and then you can't remember eating it.

Anyway. Enough of all that. (PEEPS THROUGH CURTAIN) I think the next scene's ready. Where was I? Oh yes . . . woe is me. (MUSES) Money can't buy me love. It must be love, love, love. Where is love? (HAND TO BROW AND EXITS THEATRICALY)

SCENE SIX

(CURTAIN OPENS TO BARON HARDCENTRE'S HOUSE. THE BARON IS SITTING THERE ALONE. THERE IS A GREAT DEAL OF NOISE - EXPLOSIONS, RUNNING FEET, ROCK RECORDS BEING SCRATCHED, TRAINS WHISTLING THROUGH, CHICKENS SQUARKING, BABIES CRYING, PLANES FLYING PAST, ELEPHANTS TRUMPETING ETC. HE STANDS UP AS CRESCENDO FINISHES)

BARON: It's very quiet today.

(WANDERS OFF. THE UGLY SISTERS ENTER)

STARBURST: Today's the day that the Prince will find his own true love.

TWIXY: Have they found the girl then?

STARBURST: No stupid. *Me*. He'll find me today. His henchmen are outside in the streets of Sweetietown and are knocking at doors. When I stick my little pinkies into that slipper . . .

TWIXY: It will fly out of the window.

STARBURST: It will fit! And the henchmen will say, "You're the girlie for him!" Oh, it will be truly romantic. I'll have a white wedding . . .

TWIXY: He'll be as white as a sheet.

(STARBURST RUNS OFF, BRINGS ON LARGE MALLETT AND HITS TWIXY ON THE HEAD)

TWIXY: Anyway. As I was saying . . . (THINKS) Ow.

(THERE IS A MIGHTY KNOCK AT THE DOOR. VOICES OFF. 'THE PRINCE'S HENCHMEN.' 'THE PRINCE'S HENCHMEN.' 'THE PRINCE'S HENCHMEN.' THEY FINALLY ARRIVE, WITH BARONESS SCATTERING ROSE PETALS BEFORE THEM)

SMARTIE PANTS: Get out of my way you old crone.

BARONESS: What a cheek.

SMARTIE PANTS: Where are the tasty young girls of the household? I have to check them out. (SUGGESTIVELY ASIDE TO AUDIENCE) Starting at the feet.

STARBURST: Cooee! We're over here.

TWIXY: Kiss me boys - I'm chocolate!

CRUNCHIE: Oh no. Let's make a run for it, Smartie Pants.

STARBURST: Don't go boys. Here's my foot. (WAVES IT)

SMARTIE PANTS: My word. Last time I saw something like that, it was hanging under a cow.

CRUNCHIE: No change there then. Come on matey. Let's get on with it and get it over.

BARONESS: How will the Prince be able to choose? Maybe he could have both of you dears . . . in a very proper and seemly way of course.

STARBURST: Mummsy. Do shut your face. The Prince will have me. I can't wait to get into that castle and throw out all those antiques. They're so old. I'll have it all decorated like Waitrose, or the Photographic department of Boots. My Prince will always be ready within the hour . . .

CRUNCHIE: (TO AUDIENCE) I'm glad we've got that joke over.

SMARTIE PANTS: Come on. Foot up.

TWIXY: Ooh. You are rough. (GRINS) And manly.

SMARTIE PANTS: (TRIES SLIPPER ON HER) Hopeless. It just about covers your big toe. *You* are not the mystery girl.

TWIXY: Oh dear. Maybe it's shrunk.

STARBURST: My turn. Budge over. (SWOPS SLIPPER WITH LARGE BOOT. IT FITS. SMARTIE PANTS REALISES AND REPLACES IT)

STARBURST: (WHISPERS) Make it fit or I'll break your arm.

SMARTIE PANTS: (STRUGGLES IN VAIN) Oh this is no good. Are there any other girls in this house?

BARONESS: No. Only my two lovely girlies.

CRUNCHIE: Are you sure?

BARONESS/STARBURST/TWIXY: Oh no. Only us.

CRUNCHIE: There must be someone else. (TO AUDIENCE) Is there?

(AS AUDIENCE SHOUT, BUTTONS ENTERS)

BARONESS: Chocolate Buttons!

BUTTONS: (TO AUDIENCE) See.

BARONESS: Buttons. Tell these silly little men that the only pretty girls in this house are my two darlings.

BUTTONS: Only two? What about . . .

(STARBURST GRABS THE BIG MALLET AND HITS BUTTONS ON THE HEAD. HE STAGGERS BACK AND FORTH FOR AGES, WITH ALL ASSEMBLED LOOKING AT HIM, AND FALLS INTO THE WINGS. THERE IS SILENCE)

SMARTIE PANTS: Come on. Let's go. I think there's going to be a domestic. I had a cat once. Had three left legs and only one on the right.

CRUNCHIE: Really? How did it walk?

SMARTIE PANTS: Left left. Left right left. Left left . . .

(THEY MARCH OFF AS CURTAINS CLOSE)

SCENE SEVEN

(PRINCE CHARMING WALKS ON ALONE)

PRINCE CHARMING: I mustn't give up hope. If only I could find her . . . talk to her. For one minute. That would be enough time for me to tell her how I feel. I would rather spend one minute with her, than a lifetime with any other girl. But where can she be?

(PRINCE CHARMING SITS ON STAGE. CINDERELLA ENTERS OPPOSITE, AND STARTS TO SWEEP THE FLOOR. SHE SINGS)

SONG FIFTEEN

(CINDERELLA PAUSES, AND, LEANING ON HER BROOM, STARES INTO SPACE, DREAMING)

PRINCE CHARMING: So where can she be? (TO AUDIENCE) Have you seen her? (REACTION) Over where? Can't you help a little? (MORE REACTION - HE LOOKS IN THE OPPOSITE DIRECTION) There's no one there. Maybe Smartie Pants and Crunchie have had more luck. (CINDERELLA FADES AWAY AS HER LIGHT FADES. FINALLY HE LOOKS OVER) You see? There's no one there. (SCARY FOOTSTEPS OFF. PRINCE IS ALARMED) Oh no. It's . . . it's . . . No. It can't be. Where can I hide? It's . . . Gobstopper. I'd recognise those footsteps anywhere.

(FOOTSTEPS GET LOUDER. LIGHTS FLICKER. FINALLY BARON HARDCENTRE WANDERS ON)

PRINCE CHARMING: Oh. Who are you?

BARON: December the 14th I think . . .
PRINCE CHARMING: I'm . . . um . . . looking for a girl.
BARON: You'll have to speak up. I'm a bit deaf.
PRINCE CHARMING: *Girl!*
BARON: (LOOKS AT WATCH) About 5.30.
PRINCE CHARMING: Now look my man. I'm your chief.
BARON: Handkerchief? (PULLS ONE OUT OF POCKET. INVITATION DROPS TO THE STAGE) Here you are my dear. Happy Easter.(WANDERS OFF. PRINCE PICKS UP INVITATION)
PRINCE CHARMING: What on earth is this? "Hardcentre three"? But there are only two Hardcentre girls. It couldn't have been that awful mother. Wait a minute . . .
(LOOKS AT AUDIENCE) That means . . . (PAUSES) What does it mean?
(REACTION) Right! It means there is another girl at Hardcentre Hall. (STIRRING MUSIC BUILDS) Smartie Pants! Crunchie!

(SMARTIE PANTS AND CRUNCHIE MARCH ON. PRINCE SHOWS THEM INVITATION AND THEY WHISPER. THEN . . .)

PRINCE CHARMING: So you see . . .
SMARTIE PANTS: That means . . .
CRUNCHIE: and so . . .
PRINCE CHARMING: . . . it could be . . .
SMARTIE PANTS: it's probably . . .

(THEY TURN ROUND, BUMP INTO EACH OTHER, RUN OFF RIGHT. RETURN AND RUN OFF LEFT, POINTING IN CONFUSION)

SCENE EIGHT

(THE CURTAINS IMMEDIATELY OPEN TO BARON HARDCENTRE'S HOUSE. THE TWO SISTERS AND THE BARONESS JUMP UP, SIRENS ARE HEARD, AND POLICE LIGHTS FLASH IN THE WINGS. SMARTIE PANTS AND CRUNCHIE MARCH ON, IN MILITARISTIC MOOD)

SMARTIE PANTS: You're all under arrest.
BARONESS: Why?
SMARTIE PANTS: Because . . . um . . . Sergeant Crunchie?
CRUNCHIE: Because . . . um . . . because you tried to pull a fast one.
BARONESS: It's the Prince who tried to pull a fast one at his ball. Unfortunately he didn't pull *anybody*.
SMARTIE PANTS: How many people live in this house?
BARONESS: How do you mean . . . live?
CRUNCHIE: (GIVES HER AN ARMLOCK) Live. Speak up.
BARONESS: Well my husband and I *exist* here. But live? My two lovely daughters . . . settle down . . . my two lovely daughters *live* here. And a chap we call Chocolate Buttons (ROARS WITH LAUGHTER. CRUNCHIE TIGHTENS GRIP) Aaaagh. He um . . . lives here. That's all. Apart from a cat called Irving.
SMARTIE PANTS: Then why were *three* invitations made out for the Hardcentre household? You didn't think did you, in your wildest dreams, that *you* should have been included?

BARONESS: Me? Goodness me no. I'm far too . . . er . . . young to get involved in the clinches of romance. Besides, I've got . . . thingy . . . the Baron. He's a tiger when he's roused.

SMARTIE PANTS: And when was he last roused?

BARONESS: Forty eight years ago.

SMARTIE PANTS: And how old are your daughters?

BARONESS: The gestation period was very long. When we were considering children I mean.

SMARTIE PANTS: I see.

BARONESS: My husband thought gestation meant a joke in India (ROARS WITH LAUGHTER. CRUNCHIE TIGHTENS HIS GRIP) Aaaagh.

(THE PRINCE ENTERS CARRYING A RADIO)

SMARTIE PANTS: Bow to his Highness. Bow to his Highness.

PRINCE CHARMING: So - have we established the identity of the third invitee?

CRUNCHIE: There has been a mistake Sir. Majesty. Highness. Sir.

PRINCE CHARMING: A mistake? Does this mean that I have searched the land to no avail? That I have seeked my true love without any luck?

SMARTIE PANTS: I'm afraid so Sir.

PRINCE CHARMING: It's time for the news. Let's tune in and see if my princess has been found on a nationwide basis. (HE STARTS TUNING IN RADIO)

CRUNCHIE: (TO AUDIENCE) This is a first, isn't it.

(PRINCE CARRIES ON TWIDDLING. SUDDENLY THERE IS A MIGHTY FLASH AND THE FAIRY GODMOTHER APPEARS, WEARING A SHOWER CAP AND HOLDING A LOOFAH)

FAIRY GODMOTHER: For heaven's sake . . . what now?

SMARTIE PANTS: (TO AUDIENCE) Cor. He got the right station, didn't he. Probably Virgin.

FAIRY GODMOTHER: Pardon? Now . . . I was in the bath when suddenly, whoosh! I was teleported here (TO AUDIENCE) It's no fun any more you know.

PRINCE CHARMING: (EXTRAVAGANTLY) I bow to a higher authority. What brings you to my humble land, fair majesty?

FAIRY GODMOTHER: You tell *me*. You tuned in, turned on and here I am.

BARONESS: Well, let me show you the door.

PRINCE CHARMING: Silence hag.

BARONESS: I wouldn't take that from anyone but you . . .

PRINCE CHARMING: Silence I say. There are evil doings in this house today. (TO AUDIENCE) Is there another girl in this house, or should I continue a relentless search which will probably take me to high adventure in far off lands and all that sort of thing? Is there another girl?

(AUDIENCE RESPOND) Is she prettier than the two ugly sisters from hell that live here? (AUDIENCE RESPOND)

BARONESS: Steady.

PRINCE CHARMING: (FALLS TO HIS KNEES IN FRONT OF THE FAIRY GODMOTHER) Tell me, fair spirit from beyond . . . is my love within these walls?

FAIRY GODMOTHER: Oh get up. How can I think with you mooning about?

STARBURST: I haven't said anything lately. Marry me dear, and let's not say any more about it.

TWIXY: No, me. Don't bother with this fat old stinkbag. With me you will find a strange contentment. (SIDLES UP TO PRINCE) Do you remember when we danced? Who took the lead?

PRINCE CHARMING: Well . . . you . . .

TWIXY: Precisely. And when it comes to *love*, you'll find I do exactly the same. Can you wait?

PRINCE CHARMING: (BREAKS AWAY) I can. Is there another girl in this household? Tell me.

BARONESS: No.

STARBURST: Sorry.

TWIXY: Absolutely not.

FAIRY GODMOTHER: I've got it! Here goes . . .

EVERYONE: Eh?

FAIRY GODMOTHER: (WAVING WAND EXTRAVAGANTLY) I call the spirits. Oh, mighty powers. Bring the girl. Bring the girl.

(AS FAIRY GODMOTHER WAVES ABOUT THE PRINCE CONTINUES)

PRINCE CHARMING: One *more* chance. Is there another girl in this foul household?

BARONESS: Not at all.

PRINCE CHARMING: If there is, I'll have you beheaded . . .

(WITH A FINAL WAVE OF HER WAND THE FAIRY GODMOTHER POINTS OFF STAGE. THERE IS A BANG AND A PUFF OF SMOKE - BUTTONS BURSTS ONTO STAGE HAND IN HAND WITH CINDERELLA)

BARONESS: Well . . . apart from her.

STARBURST: I was just about to say that.

TWIXY: Yes. Sort of qualify it.

PRINCE CHARMING: I'll deal with you later . . .

STARBURST: Promises.

PRINCE CHARMING: Meanwhile. Smartie Pants - try the slipper on this one.

(SMARTIE PANTS GOES TO BUTTONS) No, the girl. (SMARTIE PANTS TRIES IT)

SMARTIE PANTS: It fits!

PRINCE: It fits!

ALL: It fits!

FAIRY GODMOTHER: Cinderella. Do you remember me?

CINDERELLA: My Fairy Godmother!

FAIRY GODMOTHER: Cinderella . . . Prince Charming. Prince Charming . . . Cinderella. I bless you and your union.

PRINCE CHARMING: (GETS DOWN ON ONE KNEE) Cinderella. Will you be my wife?

BARONESS: Wait a minute, you romantic fool. What about us? My girls are just blossoming . . . busting out . . . you've made a serious mistake this time, Princey boy.

PRINCE CHARMING: (STANDS UP AND PUTS HIS ARM ROUND HER) Oh come on, it will all be fine.

BARONESS: Will it?

PRINCE CHARMING: You can come to the wedding.

BARONESS: And what about my girlies . . . ?

PRINCE CHARMING: They can come, can't they Cinderella?

BUTTONS: (LAST HOPE) She hasn't said yes yet.

PRINCE CHARMING: Oh my goodness. (ON ONE KNEE AGAIN) Will you marry me - and I promise we'll always go to bed before midnight.

FAIRY GODMOTHER: Very wise. You don't want it to turn into a pumpkin, do you?

PRINCE CHARMING: What?

FAIRY GODMOTHER: The bed.

PRINCE CHARMING: Oh.

CINDERELLA: I will . . . my Prince. Forever.

(THEIR HANDS MEET)

PRINCE CHARMING: Forever.

BARONESS: (TOUCHED) Isn't this *romantic*. They really look nice together.

STARBURST: But what about us?

TWIXY: Yes, what about us?

(SISTERS START TO CRY ENORMOUSLY, BUT ARE INTERRUPTED BY HEAVY FOOTSTEPS AND SPOOKY MUSIC)

PRINCE CHARMING: (REACHES FOR SWORD) It can't be . . . not at a time like this. Forward men.

(SMARTIE PANTS AND CRUNCHIE MARCH FORWARD AND ARM THEMSELVES WITH SOMETHING)

BARONESS: Not Gobstopper . . . it can't be.

SISTERS: On no . . .

(TENSION BUILDS AS THE DOOR CREAKS OPEN. BARON ENTERS. EVERYONE RELIEVED)

BARONESS: Oh it's you.

BARON: Eh?

BARONESS: *It's you* . . .

BARON: Shoe? Oh, the shoe! Did it fit?

BARONESS: Oh be quiet. Come on, it's past your bedtime.

BARON: But what if we meet Gobstopper?

BARONESS: Don't worry.

BARON: Hurry. All right.

(HE RUNS OFF - BARONESS LOOKS APOLOGETICALLY AT THE COMPANY)

BARONESS: He *was* a prince when I married him. Let that be a warning to you.

(BARONESS EXITS)

PRINCE CHARMING: Cinderella - we must depart my love. There's a great deal to be done.

CINDERELLA: We must hurry. A very lifetime will not be enough to fulfil our love.

(SISTERS GLARE AT EACH OTHER AS CINDERELLA AND PRINCE CHARMING WALK OFF, ARM IN ARM, FOLLOWED BY THE FAIRY GODMOTHER, SHOWERING SPARKLES ETC)

STARBURST: I'll have nothing to wear for the wedding. And no man to lean on when I get drunk.

TWIXY: Nor will I. Even warthogs find a mate to snuffle about with. But us? Nobody wants *us*.

(THEY BOTH CRY)

STARBURST: I'll tell you what dear. Let's go down to Sweetietown and buy some new dresses . . .

TWIXY: . . . and sweets . . .

STARBURST: . . . and some wedding hats . . .

TWIXY: . . . and sweets . . .

STARBURST: . . . and lots of toasters for the wedding present.

TWIXY . . . and sweets.

STARBURST: Yes! Let's go now.

SMARTIE PANTS: Ladies. Er . . . we were about to walk back to the Palace. That's through Sweetietown. May we accompany you?

(CRUNCHIE GRINS. THE SISTERS GRIN BROADLY, LINK ARMS WITH SMARTIE PANTS AND CRUNCHIE, AND EXIT, GIGGLING. BUTTONS IS LEFT ALONE)

BUTTONS: What about me. Alone again. (AAAHS FROM AUDIENCE) No money. No job probably, after the way I talked to that lot. All alone. Completely alone . . . (THERE IS CLUMPING OF HEAVY BOOTS OFF) What's that? (THE LIGHTS FLICKER) It can't be . . . it's . . .it's . . . Gobstopper, I know it is. What shall I do? Nowhere to hide . . . gulp. (THE NOISE GETS LOUDER. FINALLY A LITTLE OLD LADY IN BIG BOOTS LIMPS ON) Are you Gobstopper? Why was everyone so afraid of you? You look pretty harmless to me.

GOBSTOPPER: I was cursed once . . .

BUTTONS: By whom?

GOBSTOPPER: That's another fairy story. I was cursed by an evil spirit who made me wear these terrible boots which could only be taken off by my own true love.

BUTTONS: (TO AUDIENCE) I bet you know how this bit's going to end, don't you. (TO GOBSTOPPER) May I?

(BUTTONS CAREFULLY REMOVES THE GREAT BOOTS. THE CLOAK COMES OFF, REVEALING SOMETHING LIKE A SPICE GIRL)

BUTTONS: Wow!

GOBSTOPPER: How can I ever thank you?

BUTTONS: (HE LINKS ARMS WITH HER AND THEY WALK OFF) I'll think of a way . . .

(THE CURTAINS CLOSE)

SCENE NINE

(SMARTIE PANTS AND STARBURST WALK ON FRONT OF CURTAIN, AS DOES CRUNCHIE AND TWIXY)

STARBURST: I say, this is all beginning to look a bit jolly.

TWIXY: Yep. A couple of hunks, and a wedding to go to. What more could we need?

STARBURST: Dancing lessons?

SMARTIE PANTS: I saw you at the ball. You don't need dancing lessons.

STARBURST: (COY) Don't I?

SMARTIE PANTS: No. You need to learn how to drive a heavy goods vehicle.

TWIXY: Ooh I say. I bet you two can't dance either.

CRUNCHIE: Dance? Watch this . . .

(ETC. THE FOURSOME TRY OUT VARIOUS DANCES, AND FINALLY GET MEMBERS OF THE AUDIENCE TO HELP THEM IN DISCO, WALTZ AND LINE DANCING. AS THEY BECOME CONVINCED THAT THIS WILL MAKE THEM A SUCCESS AT THE WEDDING THEY SING . . .)

SONG SIXTEEN

(WITH THE HELP OF THE AUDIENCE, SMARTIE PANTS AND STARBURST ON ONE SIDE, CRUNCHIE AND TWIXY ON THE OTHER. AS THEY GO OFF, ARM IN ARM . . .)

SCENE TEN

(THE CURTAIN OPENS TO THE WEDDING. TWO VILLAGERS, DRESSED UP AS LIQUORICE ALLSORTS COME ON AND INTRODUCE THE PROCEEDINGS)

ALLSORT 1: All sorted!

ALLSORT 2: Liquorice Allsorted!

BOTH: Ladies and Gentlemen.

ALLSORT 1: The time has come, strike up the band.

ALLSORT 2: It's happy time in Sweetieland.

ALLSORT 1: So travel in, from far and near.

ALLSORT 2: To see the wedding of the year.

BOTH: It's fun, and frothy, fast and free.

ALLSORT 1: So come along with you . . .

ALLSORT 2: . . . and me.

ALLSORT 1: It's all too much.

ALLSORT 2: We can't contain . . .

ALLSORT 1: The thrill of it.

ALLSORT 2: We must explain

ALLSORT 1: To miss it now . . .

ALLSORT 2: You'd be insane.

ALLSORT 1: So waiter!

ALLSORT 2: Bring us more Champagne!

ALLSORT 1: (SLOWS DOWN) Well, they haven't actually got any Champagne. It's Diet Coke or nothing.

ALLSORT 2: So what? Diet Coke wouldn't have rhymed.
ALLSORT 1: You could have thought of something else.
ALLSORT 2: Why?

(THEY WANDER OFF BICKERING, AS THE CURTAIN OPENS)

SCENE ELEVEN

(THE MUSIC BUILDS, THE LIGHTS COME UP AND THE CURTAIN OPENS TO THE FINALE. ALL IS GLITTER AND SNOW)

SONG SEVENTEEN

(AS THE CHORUS WALKS ON THEY START THE SONG QUIETLY, BUILDING AS THE BARON AND BARONESS APPEAR, FOLLOWED BY THE FAIRY GODMOTHER, SMARTIE PANTS AND STARBURST, CRUNCHIE AND TWIXY, BUTTONS AND GOBSTOPPER . . . AND FINALLY, DRESSED IN WHITE FUR AND FINERY, PRINCE CHARMING AND CINDERELLA. DURING A MUSICAL BREAK, THE FAIRY GODMOTHER WALKS FORWARD)

FAIRY GODMOTHER:

I've been around so many years
Seen the laughter turn to tears
But when you've been around a while
Those tears dry up, and make a smile.
I've been around a long time since
So when I see a lonely Prince
I just can't help but get involved
Until love's problems all are solved.
Your storybooks are crammed with tales
I've lived to solve, kept on the rails.
There's dwarfs and beanstalks, loves *first* kiss
But never one as sweet at this.
Never before and never since
Like Cinderella and her Prince.

(THE MUSIC BUILDS FOR A FINAL CHORUS AND, AS THE LIGHTS FADE AND THE CURTAINS CLOSE, THE WORDS 'CINDERELLA' AND 'PRINCE CHARMING' ARE INTERTWINED IN A PROJECTED HEART. THEY KISS AS THE CURTAINS ARE ABOUT TO TOUCH)

