

“ALIAS CINDERELLA”  
A Justin Thyme Mystery  
by Bruce Kane

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A Justin Thyme Mystery  
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**CHARACTERS:**

JUSTIN THYME: Tough talking, hardboiled Bogart like detective  
EFFIE: Thyme’s voluptuous secretary  
PRINCE CHARMING: Self described “God’s gift to women.”  
ANNA REKSIC: Sexy femme fatale and old adversary of Thyme’s.  
CINDERELLA: Young, sweet talking damsel in distress  
PINOCCHIO: Young shoe maker with a chip on his shoulder  
LACKEY: Prince Charming’s unappreciated servant.  
URSULALA/VINNY: Anna’s ugly stepdaughter/Gangster  
PALACE GUARDS  
MEMBERS OF ROYAL COURT

**SETTING:** Off to one side sits Thyme’s beat up desk and hat rack. The remaining section of the stage will over time become a variety of settings, requiring minimum sets and props.

**BEFORE LIGHTS COME UP:**

*(We hear a distant clock tower striking midnight. Bong... Bong... Bong... Bong... Bong.. Bong... Bong... Bong... Bong... Bong... )*

LIGHTS UP:

*(A pretty young woman, CINDERELLA, dressed in a ball gown and wearing a harlequin mask and only one shoe appears. She looks around nervously and hurriedly limps across the stage and out of sight.)*

*(All is quiet for a moment and then we hear the sound of a BLUESY JAZZ SAXOPHONE wailing its plaintiff cry.)*

*(JUSTIN THYME enters wearing a trench coat and fedora. He takes off the fedora and hangs it on a beat up hat rack, turns and faces the audience.)*

THYME: It was one of those days when all I wanted to do was have a cold beer with a hot blonde. What I didn't want was a case that would cripple my confidence, sap my sense of self importance and deflate my well endowed ego. A case that would make me consider hanging up my roscoe and finding another line of work that didn't include bums, bimbos and bean shooters. But that's exactly what I got when Effie, my overdeveloped secretary with the underdeveloped typing skills oscillated into my office.

MUSIC OUT:

*(EFFIE oscillates in wearing high heels, a short skirt and a low cut sweater. Feel free to underscore Effie's oscillation with drumbeats)*

THYME: She perched herself on the edge of my desk. *(Thyme looks back at Effie who perches herself on his desk. Then he looks back to the audience)* I forgot about the beer. Then she crossed her legs. *(Effie crosses her legs. Thyme looks at her then back to the audience)* I forgot about the blonde. Then, she leaned over. *(Thyme looks back to Effie who leans over. Thyme looks back at audience)* That's when I forgot my social security number, home address and mother's maiden name.

EFFIE: There's someone who wants to see you.

THYME: *(to audience)* She said in a breathy whisper that made grown men glad... they were grown men. I asked her who it was? *(to Effie)* Who is it? *(to audience)* She said he wouldn't say.

EFFIE: He wouldn't say.

THYME: *(to audience)* I asked her what he wanted. *(to Effie)* What does he want? *(to audience)* She said he wouldn't say that either.

EFFIE: He wouldn't say that either.

THYME: *(to audience)* She said he was a prince or something.

EFFIE: I think he's a prince or... something.

THYME: What's make you think that? *(to audience)* I asked..

EFFIE: The uniform.

THYME: *(to audience)* She replied.

EFFIE: And the crown, of course.

THYME: Of course. *(to audience)* I wasn't surprised. When you work my side of the street you run into a lot of princes. Most of them call themselves "Charming." Usually that's the one thing they ain't... charming. *(to Effie)* Send him in cumquat knees. Let's hear what he's got to say.

*(Effie oscillates out. A moment later, LACKEY, a large man dressed in fancy uniform enters.)*

LACKEY: Presenting his royal highness Prince Alfonse William Robert Hastings Oxford Jonathan Milford Anthony Philip William ... again...

THYME: *(to audience)* Is there a name this guy doesn't have?

LACKEY: Albert Constantine Charming. Prince of Lyman on Twill, Hutchings on Vetch, Twicky on Guss, Ham on Rye and the answer to every woman's prayer.

*(PRINCE CHARMING strides in like he owns the world. He's wearing a uniform right out of "The Student Prince" ... and a crown)*

THYME: *(to audience)* I hadn't seen an entrance like that since the second act of "King Lear... The Musical."

PRINCE: Thank you, Lumpy.

LACKEY: Lackey, your highness.

PRINCE: I gather by the lettering on that shabby door in that shabby hall outside this shabby office, that you are Thyme.

THYME: *(to audience)* At least, the guy could read. More than you can say for most of these inbreds.

PRINCE: I am told that you are very good at finding things.

THYME: You were told right.

PRINCE: Good. I want you to find something.

THYME: Lemme guess. A skirt.

PRINCE: Why would I want you to find a skirt? That makes no sense whatsoever. Do I look like a man who wears a skirt?

THYME: A skirt... A Betty... A thrush... A frail... A broad... A dame..

PRINCE: Oh, by that, I suppose, you mean a young woman.

THYME: You could call her that.

PRINCE: Well, Mr. Thyme, can you do it? Find this "skirt" as you so colorfully refer to her.

THYME. Why don't you tell me the whole story, Prince And don't leave out any of the details....*(to audience)* He did and he didn't.

*(While Thyme narrates, the Prince tells his story, acting out each little incident. Although his mouth is moving we don't hear what he's saying. The effect is that of a character in a silent movie.)*

THYME: He said it all began the night before last. He'd thrown a big costume ball at the palace. Anyone who was anyone, or knew anyone who was anyone, was there.

*(Prince mimes shaking hands with guests and making small talk)*

THYME: Sometime during the evening his eyes came to rest on a very tasty dish.. that wasn't on the menu.

*(Prince does very big double take)*

THYME: She was to hot what chocolate is to fudge.. She was sweet, lovely...innocent . *(Prince mimes shaping his hands around an imaginary woman's very curvy body)* From the moment he laid his glimmers on her he knew he had partake of this savory delight. So he did what any self respecting prince would do... he sent an emissary.

*(Prince whispers to Lackey)*

LACKEY: *(same tone of voice he used announcing the Prince's entrance)* Presenting his royal highness Alfonse William Robert Hastings Oxford Jonathan..

*(Thyme signals "Cut." Lackey stops)*

THYME: The Prince asked her if she'd like to trip the light.

*(Prince mimes making small talk then makes a twirling motion with his hand indicating a dance.)*

THYME: The kitten said yes.

*(The Prince acts overjoyed and begins to mime dancing with the girl)*

THYME: They talked.

*(Prince mimes a spirited two way conversation)*

THYME: They danced.

*(Prince mimes dancing then running his hand down her back to her behind)*

THYME: They laughed.

*(Prince mimes laughing)*

THYME: They danced some more.

*(The Prince mimes dancing then having his hand pushed back up)*

THYME: The Prince made his move.

*(Prince mimes puckering up)*

THYME: Obviously, not the smoothest move. That's when the big tick tock on the wall began to chime midnight

*(Prince mimes pronouncing loud "bong, bong, bong")*

THYME: Bong... Bong... Bong... Okay, we get it.

*(The Prince stops mouthing the "bongs")*

THYME: Then, for no apparent reason, the frail took off like a bat out of hell.

*(Prince mimes reaching out for her)*

THYME: The only thing she left behind was one very frustrated prince.

*(Prince mimes his frustration)*

THYME: And one shoe.

*(The Prince mimes kneeling down and picking up the shoe)*

PRINCE: And that's the whole story.

THYME: You still got the shoe?

PRINCE: Lumley.

LACKEY: That's Lackey, your highness.

*(Lackey produces a very sexy high heeled shoe)*

THYME: That's one helluva shoe, Prince.

PRINCE: She was one helluva girl.

THYME: What did she look like?

PRINCE: Aside from possessing shoulders carved from the finest alabaster, a smile as fresh as a morning sunrise and a body like a brick pagoda, I couldn't say.

THYME: What do you mean, you couldn't say?

PRINCE: I couldn't say. She was wearing a mask.

THYME: A mask? Was she that ugly?

PRINCE: We were all wearing masks. It was a masked ball. You don't get out much, do you Mr. Thyme?

THYME: You're not giving me much to go on Prince.

PRINCE: If I had anything to go on, I wouldn't need you, would I?

THYME: Missing dames ain't usually my specialty.

PRINCE: I'll pay you handsomely. Lampley..

LACKEY: That's Lackey, highness.

PRINCE: The gold.

*(Lackey hands Thyme a bag of gold coins)*

PRINCE: I believe this will more than make up for your reticence.

THYME: That's a lotta lettuce, Prince.

PRINCE: Then I can count on you, Mr. Thyme?

THYME: I'll see what I can do.

PRINCE: And I trust I can count on your discretion? If word ever got out I was searching for a girl, every young woman in the kingdom with shoulders carved from the finest alabaster, a smile as fresh as a morning sunrise and a body like a brick pagoda, would be lining up outside the castle gate offering who knows what for a chance to fit into that shoe.

THYME: And we wouldn't want that, would we Prince?

PRINCE: It's not easy being me, Mr. Thyme. Let me know the moment you find her. I'm counting on you. *(calls out)* Loopy.

LACKEY: That's Lackey, your highness

PRINCE: To the castle.

LACKEY: Yes, highness.

*(Lackey picks the Prince up in his arms and carries him off as Effie returns)*

EFFIE: I don't know what it is. but there's something about a man in a uniform... And a crown ... that makes a girl want to throw her hands in the air and yell "I surrender."

THYME: Her hands?

EFFIE: Among other things. *(looks at shoe)* If that's for me, I'm gonna need one more. I've got two legs in case you hadn't noticed.

THYME: I noticed. *(to audience)*

EFFIE: I noticed you noticed.

THYME: *(to audience)* It was hard not to... notice. *(to Effie indicating shoe)* The Prince wants me to find the frail that goes with this. Seems like she and the prince were settin' off enough sparks to light a small fire when, for reasons unknown, she split. The only thing she left behind was this shoe.

EFFIE: You believe him?

THYME: Let's just say I believe this very generous bag of geetus he gave me. *(hands it to Effie then turns to audience)* There was something about this case that didn't smell right. It happens that way with some cases. The client tells you some things and some things they don't tell you. Usually the things they didn't tell you are more important than the things they did tell you. The only problem is... they didn't tell you. *(shows shoe to Effie)* Say, apple hips, you're a girl.

EFFIE: It's been a long time since I was a "girl."

THYME: Be that as it may, what can you tell me about this shoe?

EFFIE: It's expensive. I can tell you that.

THYME: How expensive is expensive?

EFFIE: With what you pay me, I could live for a year on what this one shoe costs.

THYME: How can you tell?

EFFIE: Like you said. I'm a "girl." Besides, this shoe was made by Manolo Gepetto. Says so right here. *(points at shoe instep)* They don't pop these out like gum balls. Every one is custom made. This shoe was made to fit only one foot.

THYME: Do me a favor, tangelo cheeks, see what you can dig up on this Gepetto character.

EFFIE: What are you gonna do?

THYME: While you're tracking down Gepetto, I'm gonna see if I can find the dame that fits this shoe. *(starts to exit)*

EFFIE: Ain't you forgetting something, boss?

THYME: What's that?

EFFIE: This *(puts the fedora on his head)* and that. *(points upward)*.

SOUND: BLUESY SAXOPHONE

THYME: What would I do without you, tangerine lips?

EFFIE: Take a lot less cold showers.

*(Effie oscillates out)*

THYME: *(to audience)* I watched Effie oscillate out of my office, took a cold shower and headed out to see if I could find the shapely leg with the shapely foot that fit the shapely shoe. I knew I might have to scope out a lot of gams before I found what I was looking for, but, like the man said... it's not easy being me.

*(Thyme walks out into the audience.)*

THYME: *(to audience)* The frail I was looking for had shoulders carved from the finest alabaster, a smile like a morning sunrise and a body like a brick pagoda. I decided to start with the brick pagoda part. *(to woman in audience)* Hiya Toots. How'd you like to be a princess? *(looks to person sitting next to her)* Oh, she's already a princess. *(moves on to another woman, kneels down to fit the shoe)* You ever dance at Big Eddie's over on the south side. You sure? I never forget a great set of stems. *(moves on to another woman and kneels down to try on the shoe)* What's your name popsicle toes? *(The woman tells him. Thyme repeats the name. It's important that it must be the full name. both first and last as it will be repeated later in the play.)* I once knew a dame named *(repeats full name)*. That was back in Frisco. She broke my heart and then she broke my arm. I was crazy about her.

*(Effie oscillates back in)*

EFFIE: Hey, boss. I got the low down on Gepetto you wanted.

THYME: Hold on. I'm busy here.

EFFIE: Busy or just tryin' to get busy?

THYME: Okay, okay...*(to woman)* Sorry, honey hips, duty calls. But, if you ever decide you wanna take a trip to the moon on gossamer wings, call me. . I'm in the book... under "trips to the moon on gossamer wings". *(crosses back to stage)*



MUSIC OUT:

THYME: So, what'd you find out, cinnamon knees?

EFFIE: *(reads from file)* Monolo Gepetto... Maker of one of a kind women's shoes and handbags. Says here he makes women's fantasies come true.

THYME: What kind of fantasies?

EFFIE: *(like what else?)* One of a kind shoes and handbags. Here's his address. *(hands Thyme slip of paper)*

THYME: Thanks elderberry ears.

EFFIE: That's what I'm here for. *(starts to oscillate out)*

THYME: Remind me to put a little something extra in your stocking this Christmas.

EFFIE: *(turns back)* You tried that once. Remember? *(exits)*

THYME: I watched Effie undulate out of my office, took a cold shower and headed over to Manolo Gepetto's fantasy factory. When I got there, I ran into a kid who was long on attitude with a nose to match.

*(PINOCCHIO enters. He's a tough talking kid with a very long nose)*

THYME: Hey, you... Cyrano.

PINOCCHIO: A wise guy. What do you want, wise guy?

THYME: A little information.

PINOCCHIO: Then you come to right place. I got as little as you need.

THYME: I'm looking for Manolo Gepetto. Is he around?

PINOCCHIO: Who wants to know?

THYME: The name's Thyme. Justin Thyme. I work for the F.B.I.

PINOCCHIO: The F.B.I.?

THYME: The Fictional Bureau of Investigation. I handle the toughest, dirtiest cases in English literature.

PINOCCHIO: You mean...?

THYME: That's right. I'm a fictional detective.

PINOCCHIO: A dick.

THYME: You could say that.

PINOCCHIO: I just did.

THYME: So let me rephrase my question. Is Manolo Gepetto around?

PINOCCHIO: Never heard of him.

THYME: That's funny. His name is on the door.

PINOCCHIO: Then how come I ain't laughing?

THYME: One more time from the top. Is this Gepetto character on the premises?

PINOCCHIO: And like I said, I never heard of him.

THYME: You're lying kid. I don't know why you're lying, but you're lying. It's as plain as the nose on your face.

PINOCCHIO: Sure, sure... Okay, so you figured it out. Pin a rose on you.

THYME: *(to audience)* I had no idea what he was talking about.

PINOCCHIO: You think it's easy walking around with a lie detector in the middle of your face? It's a curse, man. How'd you like it if every time you told a lie, your nose grew an inch.

THYME:*(to audience)* If that was the case, I'd have a redwood between my eyes.

PINOCCHIO: It sucks, man. Especially when it comes to women.

THYME: Dames can be a little "selective" when it comes to a guy's mug.

PINOCCHIO: Oh no...That's not it... It's great in the beginning. They all want to know if it's true what they say.

THYME: You mean big nose..? *(leaves rest unsaid)*

PINOCCHIO: You start seeing someone. She tells you your different from all the others guys she's dated. You're so honest... So straightforward.... But it's always out there. Always.

THYME: The question.

PINOCCHIO: You got it, my man. The question.

THYME: The unanswerable question.

PINOCCHIO: It's like this giant boulder that starts rolling right at you as soon as things start to get serious. And it just keeps rolling and rolling and rolling.

THYME: Getting bigger and bigger.

PINOCCHIO: Every other guy in the world can fake his way through it by lying through his teeth. But not me. Not when she finally asks...

THYME: The unanswerable question!!!

PINOCCHIO: Does this dress make me look fat?

THYME: (*puts his arm around Pinocchio*) It's gotta be rough. I feel for you my friend. Nothin'll kill a relationship faster than the truth.

PINOCCHIO: Thanks, Thyme. Thanks for understanding. You're alright. What do you need?

THYME: Recognize this shoe? (*holds up shoe*)

PINOCCHIO: It's one of ours. I made it myself.

THYME: Who'd you make it for?

PINOCCHIO: Some old broad came in a couple of months ago with this hot, young chick. Talk about being tough, hard and mean.

THYME: The young chick.

PINOCCHIO: No, the old broad She had my boss fit her for the shoe.

THYME: The old broad?

PINOCCHIO: No, the young chick.

THYME: These two women... Any names mentioned?

PINOCCHIO: One... Lisa Condo.

THYME: The young chick?

PINOCCHIO: No, the old broad. She didn't seem too happy.

THYME: The old broad.

PINOCCHIO: No the young chick. She paid with a bag of cold coins.

THYME: The young chick.

PINOCCHIO: No the old broad.

THYME: Can you describe her?

PINOCCHIO: She was sweet, lovely...innocent . *(Mimes shaping his hands around an imaginary woman's very curvy body)*

THYME: The old broad.

PINOCCHIO: No the young chick.

THYME: How about the old broad?

PINOCCHIO: She wasn't sweet, lovely and innocent. Although she was *(Mimes shaping his hands around an imaginary woman's very curvy body)*

THYME: How would you describe her?

PINOCCHIO: Imagine the Wicked Witch Of The North... minus the warmth.

THYME: The young chick?

PINOCCHIO: No the old broad.

THYME: Thanks kid, you've been a big help.

PINOCCHIO: Remember, shamus, you were never here.. And we never talked. *(starts to exit)*

THYME: Hey kid.

PINOCCHIO: Yeah.

THYME: Keep your nose clean.

PINOCCHIO: Easy for you to say. *(exits)*

THYME: I called Effie and had her track down everything she could on a dame named Lisa Condo. By the time I got back to the office, Effie had the rundown. *(Effie undulates in carrying a file)* What do you got, apricot ears?

EFFIE: Lisa Condo... Sells real estate on the Westside. She's got a rap sheet as long as your...*(looks over at Thyme)*... "arm."

THYME: What for?

EFFIE: Mail fraud, wire fraud, securities fraud, insurance fraud, bond fraud, check fraud, credit card fraud, medical fraud, online fraud, off line fraud, defensive line fraud, and, oh yeah... fraud fraud.

THYME: A busy girl.

EFFIE: And she's also got a list of aliases as long as your... *(glances over at Thyme)*... "arm."

THYME: What other monikers she been usin'?

EFFIE: Ginger Snap, Helen Troy, Barbara Seville, Carrie Baggs, Isabell Ringing, Marsha Mellow, Anne Teak, May Day, and Anna Reksic.

THYME: What was that last one?

EFFIE: Anna Reksic. Ring a bell?

THYME: Like a church steeple on Saturday morning.

EFFIE: Sunday morning.

THYME: Sunday morning. You got an address on this Lisa Condo?

EFFIE: Right here, boss *(hands him a slip with the address)*

THYME: You're the best apple hips.

EFFIE: So I've been told. *(Oscillates out of the office)*

MUSIC: BLUESY SAXOPHONE

THYME: I watched Effie oscillate out of the office, took a cold shower, and headed over to catch up with an old friend. If you can call a dame who once tried to put a shiv in your back, an old friend.

*(Thyme crosses the stage as ANNA slinks in, all legs, hips and shoulders and everything in between)*

ANNA: Well, well. If it isn't Justin Thyme, fictional dick. How's tricks, Thyme?

*(She slowly and sensually circles Thyme)*

THYME: Anna Reksic. *(to audience)*. Back when I first knew her everyone called her Hard Hearted Anna. That was back in Savannah. She was the meanest broad in town. I once spent an evening with Anna sittin' on my knees. Lemme tell ya, it was like walking through Alaska in your BVD's. Never forget the first time I laid my peepers on her. We were down at the beach. I looked over and there was Anna with this great big pan. She was pourin' water on a drowning man. Naturally, I was captivated.

MUSIC OUT:

ANNA: Like I said five minutes ago, Thyme, how's tricks?

THYME: Can't complain. How about you Anna? Or is it Lisa, now?

ANNA: You can call me anything you want.

THYME: In that case I'll call you Velma.

ANNA: It's been a long time, Thyme.

THYME: Miss me?

ANNA: The only time I missed you was when my gun jammed. Speaking of guns, is that a roscoe in your pocket or are you just glad to see me.

THYME: It's a roscoe.

ANNA: You always did know how to smooth talk a girl, Thyme. . So, do what do I owe this visit? (*Thyme holds up the shoe.*) Oh Thyme... You shouldn't have.

THYME: I didn't. Recognize it?

ANNA: Should I?

THYME: You should. You ordered it special.

ANNA: I order a lot of things. You should see my Amazon bill.

THYME: You had this one custom made and another one just like it.

ANNA: I ordered two right shoes? I don't think so.

THYME: Well, not just like it. For the other foot.

ANNA: Thanks for returning it, shamus.

THYME: This one wasn't made for you.

ANNA: What makes you say that?

THYME: It's a petite. That's French for you couldn't wedge this on your foot with a crowbar.

ANNA: Keep sweet talking me Thyme and I might have to give up all my secrets.

THYME: Just produce the girl.

ANNA: What girl?

THYME: The girl who goes with this shoe.

ANNA: If you insist. *(calls out)* Ursulala.

*(Ursulala enters. Ursulala is one ugly stepdaughter mostly because she is actually Anna's henchman in disguise. He does his best to act girlish.)*

ANNA: This is my stepdaughter Ursulala. Ursulala is my fourth husband's fifth daughter. *(Ursulala shakes her head)* My fifth husband's fourth daughter. *(Ursulala shakes her head and holds up six fingers)* My fifth husband's sixth daughter. *(Ursulala shakes her head)* My sixth husband's fifth daughter? *(Ursulala nods)* I had a sixth husband? *(Ursulala nods)* I'm gonna have to pay more attention. So, go ahead Thyme. Fit away.

*(Thyme kneels down and tries to fit the shoe on Ursulala's foot. Not even close. Thyme rises.)*

THYME: Nice try, Anna. But not even close.

ANNA: Thank you Ursulala. You can go to your room now. Mommy and Mr. Thyme have some business to discuss.

*(Ursulala giggles and flounces out)*

THYME: Okay, Anna, what's the scam?

ANNA: No scam. I'm just a hard working single mom just trying to sell a little real estate. Could I interest you in a two bedroom condo, completely refurbished, granite counter tops, fresh paint, new appliances, four tennis courts, three pools, two parking spaces and...?

THYME: Yeah, I know. A partridge in a pear tree. Cut the sales pitch, Anna. The only thing you're selling is smoke and mirrors.

ANNA: Then you've seen the place.

THYME: You got something up your sleeve and I'm not leaving here until I find out what it is.

LISA: *(approaches Thyme)* If you want to look up my sleeve, shamus ... it'll cost you dinner and a movie.

THYME: *(to audience)* It was an offer I couldn't refuse.

MUSIC: BLUESY SAXOPHONE

BLACKOUT:

LIGHTS UP

*(It's moments later. Thyme is tucking his shirt in. Anna is wearing his fedora and smoking a cigarette.)*

THYME: *(to audience)* The only thing up Anna's sleeve was her arm. She wasn't hiding anything that I could find. And believe me, I looked. *(to Anna)* Just cause I couldn't find anything this time doesn't mean I'm not gonna keep looking.

ANNA: Can I take that as a promise? *(starts to sashay out)* Oh, by the way, shamus... All those ladies who used to call your Superman?

THYME: *(puffing up)* What about 'em?

ANNA: They were right. *(Thymes puff us even more)* You really are faster than a speeding bullet. *(exits)*

THYME: *(to audience)* There were definitely two sides to this case. One was down and one was up. The downside? I was getting nowhere. The upside? I was getting there fast. But, what I didn't expect was the unexpected turn the case was about to take. That's the trouble with unexpected turns. They come when you least expect them. When I got back into the office *(crosses back to desk)* I found a visitor waiting for me.

MUSIC OUT:

*(Cinderella limps in wearing one high heel shoe. She's dressed in a light flowery dress, dark glasses and a large brimmed hat. She speaks in fluttery, southern belle accent with just a hint of Blanche DuBois)*

CINDERELLA: Are you mistah Thyme?

THYME: I'm Thyme. And who might you be?

CINDERELLA: I'm the girl you've been looking for.

THYME: All my life or just recently?

CINDERELLA: The one the Prince wants you to find.

THYME: I've had a lot of applicants lately who think they can fill the shoe. What makes you think you can? *(Cinderella perches on Thyme's desk and extends a shapely leg)* Good start.

CINDERELLA: Well, Mr. Thyme? *(Thyme just stares at the outstretched leg)*

THYME: Yeah?

CINDERELLA: The shoe.

THYME: Oh, yeah... The shoe.

*(Thyme takes out the shoe, kneels, slips the shoe on)*

THYME *(to audience)* If they made gloves for feet, this would have fit like one.



*(Cinderella extends the other leg to show that the shoe on her other foot matches)*

CINDERELLA: A perfect match.

THYME: You can say the same for the shoes.

CINDERELLA: Now do you believe me, Mr. Thyme?

THYME: The Prince is gonna be happy to see you again.

CINDERELLA: Oh no, Mr. Thyme. You musn't tell him. No, no, no... That's what I came to tell you. You mustn't keep lookin' for me. And you mustn't tell my wicked, wicked stepmother either.

THYME: Wicked, wicked stepmother?

CINDERELLA: Yes, my wicked, wicked stepmother. Lisa Condo.

THYME: Lisa Condo is your stepmother?

CINDERELLA: I'm her eighth husband's seventh daughter. Or her seventh husband's eighth daughter. Oh, fiddy dee, it's also so confusing for a poor little girl like me. If she found out I was talking to you, I shudder to think what she might do.

THYME: *(to audience)* I told her to tell me the whole story. Not to leave out any of the details. *(to Cinderella)* Tell me the whole story and don't leave out any of the details. *(to audience)* She did and she didn't.

CINDERELLA: It was all my wicked, wicked stepmother's idea. She made me do it.

THYME: Made you do what?

CINDERELLA: She made me wear that form fitting ball gown by Donatella Versace. And the twenty carat, one a kind, diamond necklace with matching ear rings from Bulgari as well as the custom made shoes by Manolo Gepetto. It was awful Mr. Thyme. Just awful.

THYME: I can imagine. What dame wants to go a fancy dress ball at the royal palace looking like Audrey Hepburn? It must have been torture. But why go to all the trouble?

CINDERELLA: My wicked, wicked stepmother called it... "setting the hook?"

THYME: I'm guessing that Prince Charming was the big barracuda she was out to land.

CINDERELLA: That is so clever of you, Mr. Thyme.

THYME: Why'd you run away when you had the fish on the line?

CINDERELLA: That was part of the plan. My wicked, wicked stepmother's plan, of course. Just engaging the prince for a night wasn't enough. It's just so embarrassing to even think about it.

THYME: Please go on.

CINDERELLA: My wicked, wicked stepmother, wanted to pull him in deeper. Reel him into the boat, I think is how she put it. She said something about a White Knight syndrome.

THYME: *(to audience)* I'd run into the White Knight Syndrome before. It's all about these guys who can only go for dames they think are damaged and vulnerable. That way they get to play the white knight, rescue them and transform them into loving and very, very grateful partners. *(pauses for a moment to let it sink in, then...)* And you thought I was just another pretty face.

CINDERELLA: That's why I ran, Mr. Thyme, so he'd follow me and rescue me and marry me and...

THYME: I know... you'd both live happily ever after.

CINDERELLA: Oh, no, Mr. Thyme. Marry me, yes. But just so my wicked, wicked stepmother could move into the palace and drain the treasury dry. She was the one who was going to live happily ever after. She's wicked my stepmother. Wicked. She treats me mean terrible, Mr. Thyme. You should definitely do something about her before she makes some other poor, innocent girl do terrible, terrible things.

THYME: You can count on it. But what are you going to do?

CINDERELLA: I am leaving Mr. Thyme. Leavin' for good. Goin' far, far away where no one will ever see me again.

THYME: I could talk to the Prince. It seemed mighty interested.

CINDERELLA: Oh no, Mr. Thyme. That wouldn't be fair to the Prince. Me not bein' who he thinks I am.

THYME: He's still a prince.

CINDERELLA: Rich or poor, it doesn't matter. I just want a man to love me for who I am. Just a sweet, innocent girl with shoulders carved from the finest alabaster, a smile like a morning sunrise and a body like a brick pagoda.

THYME: Where will you go?

CINDERELLA: Where I can be free. Free from wearin' rags, and scrubbin' floors and goin' to bed without my supper. As God is my witness, Mr. Thyme, I will nevah be hungry again. *(starts to leave)*

THYME: At least tell me your name.

CINDERELLA: O'Hara... Katie Cinderella O'Hara. *(exits)*

THYME: *(to audience)* And with that she was gone. Gone with the wind.

*(A beat later Effie returns)*

EFFIE: So, what was her story?

THYME: She's the dame I've been looking for.

EFFIE: All your life or just recently?

THYME: The one the prince wanted me to find. Only she don't want to be found. And I don't blame her. All I gotta do now is break the bad news to the prince. Otherwise this case is over. *(to audience)* Or so I thought. But unexpected turns have ways of turning up unexpectedly and this turn was really unexpected which why I didn't expect it.

*(A large man stumbles in and collapses in front of Thyme. As he lays face down we notice a rather large knife in his back)*

EFFIE: Who is he?

THYME: *(Rolls the body over)* It's Ursulala.

EFFIE: Who?

THYME: Anna Reksic's ugly stepdaughter.

EFFIE: I'll give you ugly, but that's no stepdaughter.

THYME: Ursulala, talk to me. Who shot you?

EFFIE: Stabbed you.

THYME: Stabbed you. *(stands)* No use...

EFFIE: Is he dead?

THYME: If he ain't, he's really good at holding his breath. Wait a minute. I know this guy.. He's part time muscle, sometime enforcer and full time Arthur Murray dance instructor.

EFFIE: Sounds versatile.

THYME: Goes by the name of Vinny "The Mug" Bingbang. Also known as Vinny "The Slug", Vinny "The Bug" and once in a while Hobart J. Percywhistle. You'd better call the coroner. Tell 'em we got a stiff for pickup.

EFFIE: *(dials phone on Thyme's desk)* Hello... This is Justin Thyme's office. We got a body here for pick up. I'll tell him. *(hangs up, turn to Thyme)* They said the earliest they could be here was tomorrow between twelve and four.

THYME: In that case, when they get here, have 'em fix my cable. In the meantime, let's prop him up in the waiting room. If anyone comes in they'll just think he 's a client.

EFFIE: With a knife in his back.

THYME: Especially with a knife in his back.

*(Thyme grabs the body by an ankle and starts to pull it off with great effort)*

THYME: You wanna give me a hand here, tangerine ears?

*(Effie gives Thyme a nice round of applause as she follows Thyme and the body out.)*

MUSIC: BLUESY SAXOPHONE

*(A wooden table and a chair are brought in. A moment later Anna enters, looks around warily, smiles at the departing stage hands who give her the once over and exit. Anna sits down by the table. Thyme returns and crosses to her.)*

MUSIC OUT:

ANNA: You didn't have to send the gendarmes, Thyme. You know me, a dinner and a movie and I would have told you everything.\

THYME: Everything?

ANNA: Most everything.

THYME: Don't get cute.

ANNA: I can't help it. I'm adorable.

THYME: Tell me what you know about a slug named Vinny "The Mug."

ANNA: Never heard of him.

THYME: Then tell me what you know about a mug named Vinny "The Slug."

ANNA: Doesn't ring a bell?

THYME: What about a slug named Vinny "The Bug?"

ANNA: Are these gentleman related, somehow?

THYME: What makes you ask that?

ANNA: They're all named Vinny.

THYME: And they have one other name in common... Ursulala, your very ugly stepdaughter.

ANNA: I admit Ursulala wasn't going to win any beauty contests, but there's no reason to be cruel, Thyme.

THYME: Whatever you called him, Ursulala just bought the farm.

ANNA: I'm surprised.

THYME: Why's that?

ANNA: He never expressed an interest in animal husbandry.

THYME: Bought the farm as in pushing up daisies, achieving room temperature, checked into the wooden Waldorf, on a permanent vacation, rang down the curtain, no longer eligible for the census.

ANNA: You mean he's dead?

THYME: If you want to put it that way?

ANNA: How'd he die?

THYME: The knife in his back may have had something to do with it.

ANNA: How did a knife get in his back?

THYME: We think somebody put it there.

ANNA: Who?

THYME: I thought you could tell us?

ANNA: Me? Why me?

THYME: Because he was working for you pretending to be your ugly stepdaughter. It raises suspicions.

ANNA: You don't think I killed Hobart.

THYME: Is that what you called him?

ANNA: Yeah. He told me his name was Hobart J. Percywhistle.

THYME: Did you bump him off?

ANNA: Why would I want to kill Hobart? He was teaching me to cha cha.

THYME: Maybe he knew too much about your operation. Maybe he wanted in on the action. Maybe you didn't want to let him in on the action. Maybe he pushed a little too hard to get in on the action. Maybe you pushed back just as hard to keep him from getting in on the action. Maybe he pushed back even harder to get back in on the action. Maybe you pushed back even harder to keep him from getting in on the action. Maybe...

*(Anna slaps Thyme)*

THYME: What'd you do that for?

ANNA: All those maybe's were making me ambivalent.

THYME: You liked sluggin' me, didn't you?

ANNA: And you liked me doing it.

THYME: *(to audience)* She was right. It did hold a certain appeal. *(to Anna)* Stop stallin' grapefruit eyes. I mean to get the whole story. Don't make me get tough with you.

ANNA: Promises, promises.

THYME: Come on... Spill or I'll book you on a 902.

ANNA: A 902. Does that come with dinner and a movie?

THYME: I know all about you and the Cinderella girl. About how you used her to get to Prince Charming.

ANNA: I don't know any Cinderella girl.

CINDERELLA: She knows you. Says you're her wicked, wicked stepmother. Says you're the one who set who set up the scam to sink your hooks into the Prince.

ANNA: What scam? I don't know anything about scamming a Prince.

THYME: Then why don't you quit stalling and start telling me what you do know. *(to audience)* She did... and she did.

ANNA: A couple of months ago, some guy came to see me.

THYME: What guy?

ANNA: Never told me his name.

THYME: And you didn't ask.

ANNA: The pouch full of gold coins said all I needed to know.

THYME: What was the cabbage for?

ANNA: Rent for an apartment for his girlfriend.

THYME: Girlfriend?

ANNA: That's what I said.

THYME: I heard ya.

ANNA: Then why did you ask?

THYME: Dramatic emphasis. What did this mysterious renter look like?

ANNA: Big... Good looking... Dark wavy hair.

THYME: The girl?

ANNA: No. The guy.

THYME: What about the girl?

ANNA: She wasn't big, good looking with dark wavy hair.

THYME: What did she look like?

ANNA: Young, sweet, innocent with shoulders carved from the finest alabaster, a smile as fresh as a morning sunrise and a body like a brick pagoda.

THYME: Did she have a name?

ANNA: Everybody's got a name.

THYME: Some people more than one. What was hers?

ANNA: Never said.

THYME: That's your story? You rented her an apartment to a girl with no name paid for by a guy with no name.

ANNA: I also took her shoe shopping.

THYME: *(takes out shoe)* For this?

ANNA: Yeah.

THYME: Where does Vinny fit into this?

ANNA: I told you I don't know any Vinny.

THYME: Ursulala then. Whatever his name was?

ANNA: Hobart J. Percywhistle. He said the guy who rented the apartment heard you'd be snooping around. The plan was for Hobart to pretend to be my stepdaughter so you'd think I'd bought the shoe for her... him...whatever.

THYME: But the shoe didn't fit.

ANNA: I didn't say it was a good plan.

THYME: *(to audience)* Anna told me that was the one and only time she ever saw Vinny.

ANNA: That was the one and only time I ever saw Vinny.

THYME: *(to audience)* She said he worked for the guy who was paying the rent.

ANNA: He worked for the guy who was paying the rent.

THYME: That she had no reason to put a knife in his back or anywhere else for that matter.

ANNA: I had no reason to put a knife in his back or anywhere else for that matter.

THYME: *(to audience)* She said that I had to believe her. That even though we'd had our differences in the past, she knew we could make a new start. That I'd ruined her for all other men and she'd always hate me for it, even though she could never get me out of her system. *(Anna slaps him)* What was that for?

ANNA: You were becoming delusional.

THYME: What happened after I tried to put the shoe on Ursulala?

ANNA: I never saw any of them again. Hobart, the girl, the guy who paid the rent.

*(Effie undulates in carrying a newspaper)*

EFFIE: Hey, boss, there's something here I think...

THYME: I'm still not buying your story, apricot eyes. I'm sure we're gonna find your prints all over the knife they took out of Vinny "The Slug."

EFFIE: Uh boss... *(pulls Thyme aside)* They already indentified the prints.

THYME: They did?

EFFIE: They belonged to Vinny's wife.



THYME: His wife?

EFFIE: Seems she caught him doin' the horizontal mambo with some hot little number calls herself... *(NAME OF WOMAN FROM THE AUDIENCE)*

THYME: Well, he was a dance instructor.

EFFIE: But if his wife was the one who checked him in to the Tombstone Towers, why would he stumble into your office?

THYME: Coincidence? Or...

EFFIE: Or what?

THYME: Or he wanted me to know he'd been shot.

EFFIE: Stabbed.

THYME: Stabbed.

EFFIE: But why?

THYME: I guess we'll never know.

EFFIE: Or...

THYME: Or what?

EFFIE: Or, it was just a cheap literary device designed to misdirect or distract from the relevant or important issue leading to a false conclusion

THYME: A green herring.

EFFIE: Red.

THYME: Red herring

EFFIE: *(thinks for a moment)* That's another explanation. Oh, this is what I came in to show you. *(hands him newspaper)*

THYME: *(shows paper to Anna)* You know the skirt in this picture?

ANNA: That's her. The girl with no name.

THYME: Only here it says her name is Sarah Bellum.

EFFIE: No surprise. She's got a list of aliases as long as your... "arm."

THYME: What are you talking about?

EFFIE, I just ran a check on her. Besides Katie Cinderella O'Hara and Sarah Bellum .....she's also known as Cara Van, Charity Case, Milly Gram, Polly Esther, Rose Bush and Sue Flay. She's wanted in six kingdoms for impersonating a damsel in distress.

THYME: According to this, in one hour she'll be taking on a another handle. Mrs. Prince Charming.

EFFIE: More likely... Princess Charming. That's the one I'd go with.

ANNA: So the great Justin Thyme got scammed by a "girl." How does it feel Thyme?

THYME: (*stunned and humiliated*) I... I don't know what to say.

ANNA: Cripple your confidence, does it? Sap your self importance? Deflate your ego?

THYME: (*to audience*) Anna had nailed it alright. My confidence had plummeted lower than a snake's belly.

ANNE: What do you gotta say for yourself now, shamus?

THYME: (*to audience*) I'd been played for a sucker. Sure, I'd let my guard down before with a dame or two ...or three...or four... or five. But what guy hasn't? It goes with the territory. But never like this.

EFFIE: Don't let it get to you boss.

THYME: (*getting dramatic*) I can't help it. I trusted her. For the first time in my life I trusted a dame. And look what it got me. A kick in the teeth.

EFFIE: You'll bounce back. You always do.

THYME: (*anguished*) Not this time. A gumshoe's only armor is his suspicion of everything and everyone. His sense of despair. His mistrust of the entire human race. Take that away and what do you got left?

EFFIE: A well adjusted detective?

THYME: Sure, well adjusted... happy... content... and one more thing.

EFFIE: What's that?

THYME: Unemployed.

ANNA: No big deal, Thyme. You're just a man like every other man.

THYME: That's what I'm afraid of.

ANNA: You never had a chance, shamus. You were just easy pickins for a great pair of ... alabaster shoulders.

EFFIE: Thyme's encountered dozens of shoulders... Hundreds. Haven't you boss? Some alabaster. Some ivory.. But most of them just cold.

ANNA: There's always the smile like a morning sunrise. Nothing like a sweet, innocent smile to make a man weak in the knees. Ain't that true, shamus?

THYME: Maybe. I don't know anymore. It's new territory for me. It's a street I never walked down before. The pavement always stayed beneath my feet before.

EFFIE: C'mon boss. You've seen plenty of smiles. Suspicious smiles. Nervous smiles. Uncomfortable smiles. Smiles that make you happy. Smiles that make you sad. Smiles when your heart is aching. Smiles even though it's breaking.

ANNA: That only leaves the obvious.

EFFIE: The obvious?

ANNA: The obvious. Your boss was done in by a body like a brick pagoda.

EFFIE: Not a chance... He's rubbed against a lot of...

THYME: Wait a minute

EFFIE: What is it, boss?

THYME: *(to Anna)* Say that again.

ANNA: Say what again?

THYME: What you just said.

ANNA: Why?

THYME: Dramatic emphasis.

ANNA: You were done in by a body like a brick pagoda.

THYME: I think you're on to something cantelope knees.

EFFIE: She is?

ANNA: I am?

THYME: *(to audience)* Yeah. Of course... That has to be it. The only mistake I ever made.

EFFIE: I wouldn't go that far.

THYME: But can you blame me? Who would ever suspect a body like that... could lie?

EFFIE: Alright then. Now that you know what it is, you'll know what to look out for the next time.

THYME: You couldn't be more right apricot lips. Next time I come face to face with a body like a brick pagoda I'll pay closer attention. Study it more closely. Investigate every angle. Scrutinize every curve. Probe every crevice and indentation.

ANNA: Is it getting warm in here or is it just me?

EFFIE: Now you're talking. That's the Justin Thyme I know and love... to torture.

THYME: *(to audience)* The crisis had passed. My mistrust of the human race had returned. My sense of self importance had been restored and my ego... well, my ego was as well endowed as ever. Maybe more so. Justin Thyme was back. *(to Effie)* Keep an eye on her.

EFFIE: What are you gonna do?

THYME: Stop a wedding.

*(He runs out)*

ANNA: He always was a romantic.

EFFIE: Come with me.

*(Effie takes Anna's arm. They begin their exit)*

ANNA: By the way, I love your ear rings.

EFFIE: Oh, thank you.

ANNA: Where did you get them?

EFFIE: I know this guy. He's incredible.

ANNA: You'll have to give me his name.

EFFIE: And you won't believe his prices.

*(As they exit, the Stagehands return. The ladies smile at them. The Stagehands give them the once over. The ladies exit. The Stagehands start to remove the table and chair. Thyme runs back across the stage, nods to the Stagehands who exit. Thyme exits. A few moments later he returns huffing and puffing)*

THYME: Why do they always have to build these castles on the top of a damn hill?

*(Thyme stumbles off. A few moments later he stumbles back in, completely winded)*

THYME: I gotta join a gym.

*(He stumbles out)*

*(The wedding procession enters. It includes Cinderella, wearing a Cinderella gown, of course, along with a MINISTER, a few ROYAL GUARDS and as many extras as you can gather. Once they are in place, Lackey enters carrying Prince Charming. They are both dressed in fancy court attire. Both wear ceremonial swords. Lackey carries the Prince to the altar and sets him down.)*

MINISTER: Dearly beloved we are gathered here today to bring together in holy matrimony, these two people, Prince Alfonse William Robert Hastings Oxford Jonathan Milford Anthony Philip William ... again... Albert Constantine Charming, Prince of Lyman on Twill, Hutchings on Vetch, Twicky on Guss and Jam on Toast and Miss Sarah Bellum. If the groom will repeat after me. I Alfonse William Robert Hastings Oxford Jonathan Milford Anthony Philip William ... again... Albert Constantine Charming.

PRINCE: I Alfonse William Robert Hastings Oxford Jonathan Milford Anthony Philip William ... again... Albert Constantine Charming.

MINISTER: Take thee Sarah Bellum...

PRINCE: Take thee Sarah Bellum..

MINISTER: To be my lawfully wedded wife.

PRINCE: To be my lawfully wedded wife.

MINISTER: To love, honor and rescue...

PRINCE: To love, honor and rescue...

MINISTER: Every chance I get.

PRINCE: Every chance I get.

MINISTER: And now if the bride will please repeat after me. I Sarah Bellum.

CINDERELLA: I Sarah Bellum...

MINISTER: Take thee Prince Alfonse William Robert Hastings Oxford Jonathan Milford Anthony Philip William ... again... Albert Constantine Charming.

CINDERELLA: : Take thee Prince Alfonse William Robert Hastings Oxford Jonathan Milford Anthony Philip William ... again... Albert Constantine Charming.

MINISTER: For my lawfully wedded husband.

CINDERELLA: For everything I can for as long as I can.

*(Thyme rushes in. He's completely out of breath)*

THYME: Stop! Stop!

PRINCE: Mr. Thyme, what do you think you're doing?

THYME: Catching my breath. *(takes some time to catch his breath)*

PRINCE: Can't you see I am about to take this woman in holy matrimony?

THYME: I think it's the other way around, Prince. She's about to take you.

PRINCE: What are you saying, Mr. Thyme?

THYME: You can't marry her Prince.

PRINCE: I can very well marry her or any woman I choose. I'm Prince Alfonse William Robert Hastings Oxford Jonathan...

THYME: Yeah... Yeah... We know...You still can't marry her.

PRINCE: Yes, I can.

THYME: No, you can't.

PRINCE: Oh yes I can.

THYME: Oh no you can't.

PRINCE: Can

THYME: Can't.

PRINCE: Can

THYME: Can't... She a fraud. She's not who she says she is, whatever she told you that was.

CINDERELLA: *(sweet southern drawl dripping with honeysuckle)* Oh fiddly dee, Princey, don't you listen to a word he's saying. The man is obviously deranged.

THYME: Her name isn't even Sarah Bellum.

CINDERELLA: It most certainly is. I come from a long line of Bellums. There's my mother Momma Bellum. My father Daddy Bellum. My mother's brother Uncle Bellum... And my Daddy's sister...*(pause, then)* Auntie Bellum. *(hold for groans)*

THYME: She told me her name was Katie Cinderella O'Hara. Depending on the time and place she also goes by Barb Dwyer, Claire Annette Reid and Lily Pond.

CINDERELLA: Oh, fiddly dee. Can't you see he just wants to break us up? I didn't want to tell you this, honeysuckle, because I know how jealous you are when other men look at me...But, well, he's in love with me. He told me so himself.

PRINCE: Why Mr. Thyme. I'm appalled. Chagrined and appalled... Chagrined, appalled... and several other words that mean chagrined and appalled.

THYME: If she's so poor and downtrodden like she says, where'd she get the dough ray me to pay for the gown, the jewels and the custom made shoes she wore to the ball?

CINDERELLA: There's a very simple explanation.

THYME: Let's hear it.

CINDERELLA: I have a fairy godmother.

PRINCE: There you see. She has a fairy godmother.

THYME: You've got a fairy godmother alright. And he's standing right... (*whirls and points at Lackey*)... there.

PRINCE: Lefty?

LACKEY: That's Lackey, your highness.

PRINCE: He looks nothing like a fairy godmother. Fairy godmothers have wings and high, fluttery voices. Besides, he couldn't afford diamonds. I pay him peanuts. Literally, I pay him peanuts.

THYME: Have you checked the petty cash lately? Ask yourself this Prince, how did Blanche Dubois here get into your party that night?

PRINCE: She must have been invited.

THYME: Really? She wasn't anyone who was anyone. She didn't even know anyone who was anyone. But she did know Lackey.

PRINCE: Conjecture, Mr. Thyme. Pure conjecture.

CINDERELLA: You tell him muffin buns.

THYME: How about this? I have an eye witness

PRINCE: An eyewitness?

CINDERELLA: She's lying.

THYME: How'd you know it was a she?

CINDERELLA: I just assumed. Eyewitnesses are always women. Everyone knows that.

THYME: Assume this. My witness identified Lackey's picture in the paper as the man who rented an apartment from her to stash his girlfriend, our little Miss Orange Blossom here. *(to audience)* I withheld that little piece of information to maintain interest and heighten suspense.

PRINCE: I find this very hard to believe Mr. Thyme.

THYME: Then believe this Prince. Lackey also paid my informant to take said girlfriend shoe shopping.

PRINCE: I fail to see the relevance. Women go shoe shopping all the time... And I do mean all the time.

THYME: But this was no ordinary shoe. This shoe would only fit one foot. Her foot. The foot that you would track down and marry.

PRINCE: Marry a foot, that's ridiculous.

THYME: Marry the owner of that foot. Who would then drain the royal treasury dry and split the loot with Lackey here.

CINDERELLA: My, you have a very vivid imagination, sir.

PRINCE: If my little mint julep said it never happened Thyme, it never happened.

THYME: Wake up Prince, Lackey is the only one who had the means, method and motivation.

PRINCE: What motivation could he possibly have?

THYME: Hatred and revenge.

PRINCE: Who could he hate that much? He doesn't even have a life.

THYME: You Prince. He hates you.

PRINCE: Don't be ridiculous, Thyme. I'm Prince Charming. Everybody loves me. *(looks around)* Isn't that right?

*(All the onlookers give him a very lukewarm response.)*

THYME: *(to audience)* It was time to play my hole card. The last link in the chain. The one piece of logic that even the Prince couldn't deny. *(to Prince)* Lackey has to be the brains behind this operation because he is the least significant character in the story and the last one you'd ever suspect.



PRINCE: *(turns to Lackey, convinced and shocked)* Lackey???

LACKEY: Now you remember my name.

PRINCE: How could you???

*(Lackey draws his sword and points at the Prince)*

LACKEY: Nobody move or the prince gets it.

*(Cinderella's sweet, mint julep accent suddenly turns "street.")*

CINDERELLA: What are you doin', you idiot? *(southern accent quickly returns)* I mean, I beg you please, sir, do not harm one precious hair on the head of my sweet, gentle prince.

*(Two Royal Guards move toward Lackey)*

LACKEY: Back off... I mean it. *(pokes the Prince with the sword)*

THYME: Everybody take it easy. We don't want anybody here getting hurt.

PRINCE: Especially me.

THYME: Listen to me Lackey. I know why you did it. All these years of taking orders... working twenty four seven without a day off and this preening, self involved buffoon can't even remember your name.

PRINCE: I resent your insinuation, Mr. Thyme.

THYME: Resent all you want, Prince. But, I'm trying to get you out of this alive. And right now my only weapon is the truth.

PRINCE: Well, I suppose if that's your only weapon.

CINDERELLA: *(to Prince)* Are you going to just stand there and let him say such awful, awful things about us?

LACKEY: You can drop the act Miriam. Thyme is wise to us.

PRINCE: Miriam? You called her Miriam?

LACKEY: That's her real name. Miriam Webster.

CINDERELLA: He's lying. I do not know this man. Before today he was a complete stranger.

THYME: Hear that Lackey. She's settin' you up to take the fall. While you're stewin' in the slammer, she's gonna be sleepin' in a feather bed up to her hips in gold, silver and servants.

CINDERELLA: Mr. Thyme. I resent that. I have no intention of sleeping with the servants. At least, not right away.

THYME: What are you going to do Lackey? You got that sword. You might as well use it. Run him through. Get it over with.

PRINCE: Are you crazy Thyme?

THYME: But is it really worth dancing the hemp fandango over this supercilious, overbearing blowhard.

PRINCE: I trust you are only saying that in the interest of saving my life, Mr. Thyme. *(quietly to Thyme)* You are just saying that in the interest of saving my life?

*(Lackey pushes the Prince into Thyme but keeps brandishing his sword)*

LACKEY: Everybody stay back.

*(Lackey starts to back up, getting ready to make his break)*

THYME: Forget it Lackey. You're not goin' anywhere.

LACKEY: And who's gonna stop me?

*(Thyme grabs the Prince's sword and blocks Lackey's exit)*

PRINCE: Be careful, Mr. Thyme. Besides being a first rate bootlicker, Lippy...

LACKEY: That's Lackey!

PRINCE: Is also a highly trained swordsman.

THYME: Great. You couldn't have mentioned that earlier?

*(Thyme and Lackey begin to duel, eventually coming nose to nose just like every duel in every Robin Hood movie)*

LACKEY: Say your prayers, flatfoot. I'm about to send you to meet your maker.

THYME: You'll have to kill me first.

*(They push away and begin dueling again)*

CINDERELLA: *(to Prince)* You musn't believe what that terrible man said about me sugar puss. You do believe that I'm just a poor, innocent girl with shoulders carved from the finest alabaster, a smile as fresh as a morning sunrise and a body like a brick pagoda.

PRINCE: I don't know what to believe... Except for the brick pagoda part.

*(Thyme and Lackey cross swords at the hilt and are once again nose to nose)*

LACKEY: You just had to stick your nose in, didn't you, Thyme? You had to stick your nose in and screw things up.

THYME: It's what I get paid to do. Screw things up.

*(They push away and continue dueling)*

PRINCE: Miriam Webster? Your real name is Miriam Webster? I don't know what to say. I'm at a loss for words.

*(Once more Thyme and Lackey are nose to nose)*

LACKEY: Take your last breath, copper, cause I'm about to turn you into shish kabob.

THYME:*(to audience)* At this point I was completely out of snappy comebacks. I was faced with two choices. Surrender and let these two escape... Or overcome my adversary with one very swift move and save the day. As I'm telling this in flashback, you have, no doubt, already figured out which choice I made. *(With one very swift move, Thyme dislodges the sword from Lackey's hand)* And you'd be right.

PRINCE: Well done, Mr. Thyme. Well done, indeed. Guards.

*(Two guards take Cinderella and Lackey into custody)*

CINDERELLA: Brains behind the operation? Give me a break, shamus. If this one was any dumber, he'd have to be watered twice a week.

THYME: I gotta it hand to you magnolia hips. You were good. Very good. The innocent act. The downtrodden step child routine. The running away from your wicked stepmother. Top notch.

CINDERELLA: And you fell for it hook, line and shoe, didn't you flatfoot?

THYME: I gotta admit. You almost got away with it. Almost.

CINDERELLA: And I would have too, if this moron had kept his mouth shut.

LACKEY: Oh sure, it was all my fault. It's always my fault.

THYME: *(to Guards)* Take 'em away.

*(The Guards lead them out)*

CINDERELLA: My mother was right about you. I should have teamed up with Rumpelstilskin when I had the chance.

*(They exit.)*

PRINCE: I don't know how to thank you Mr. Thyme. You saved me from making a terrible mistake.

THYME:(*pridefully*) It's what I do, Prince. Keep people from making mistakes. When I'm not screwing things up.

PRINCE: And what will I do? How will I ever find another one like her?

THYME: Trust me prince, you're not gonna have any trouble.

PRINCE: How can you be so sure, Mr. Thyme?

THYME: Look around you. I don't know about sweet and innocent, but there's a world of dames out there (*gestures toward all the women in the audience*) just waiting to meet their Prince Charming. I can even introduce you to a couple. (*Indicates the women he talked to in the audience*)

PRINCE: Perhaps you're right, Mr. Thyme. Perhaps you're right. (*calls out*) Lackey.

THYME: (*to Prince*) I'm afraid there is no more Lackey, Prince.

PRINCE: But how will I get back to the palace?

THYME: You could try walking.

PRINCE: Walking. Walking... What a novel idea.

(*The Prince exits. The Royal Court follows*)

THYME: (*to audience*) My job was over. Cinderella and Lackey were in the tower. The Prince was back in his castle licking his wounds....

(*The Prince returns, followed by the Royal Court*)

PRINCE: The castle... It's... (*points in the other direction, crosses the stage and exits followed by the Royal Court*)

EFFIE: (*pulsates in*) Hey boss. If you don't need me for anything else...I've got a date.

THYME: Oh yeah? Who's the lucky guy?

(*Pinocchio enters*)

THYME: Really?

EFFIE: Really. He's honest, straightforward and doesn't play games like some people I could name.

*(Effie takes Pinocchio's arm as they start to exit)*

THYME: *(to audience)* I give it a month.

EFFIE: *(turns back)* And another thing.

THYME: What's that?

EFFIE: It's true what they say

THYME: *(to audience)* Okay, two months.

*(Effie and Pinocchio exit)*

THYME: It actually lasted longer than I thought it would. But then it came... Like it always does. The inevitable question. And Pinocchio was never heard from again. As for the Prince, a few months later he was back in the saddle,

*(The Prince is carried across the stage by a NEW LACKEY)*

THYME: Okay.. Well, not a saddle exactly.

PRINCE: Hurry man, hurry.

THYME: He was off to rescue another frail. Only this one was under a spell and snoring up a storm somewhere deep in the woods.

PRINCE: Hurry... We must get there before she awakens. *(Prince and New Lackey exit)*

BLUESY SAXOPHONE BEGINS

THYME: And as for me...?

*(Anna slinks in)*

ANNA: So what do you say Thyme? Let's go back to my place. You can dust me for prints.

THYME: Keep talking like that, pomegranate thighs, and I'll have to slap the cuffs on ya'.

ANNA: Promises, promises. Always with the promises.

*(Thyme and Anna exit arm in arm as the lights and then the saxophone slowly fade)*

THE END