

ROSSINI

LA CENERENTOLA

English Version by Donald Pippin

ACT 1

There's no way around it. The setting is a disgrace-- shabby, rundown, in obvious need of repair. Just look at it! Who can fail to notice the peeling paint, the threadbare carpet, the moth eaten furniture? Ruins of a former splendor that clearly tell the story of a man, vain, foolish and extravagant, who has squandered the family fortune. Sad to say, this is where Don Magnifico lives with his three daughters – excuse me, his two and a half daughters, as they would be quick to point out.

Although he has arrived at misfortune entirely through his own folly, Don Magnifico remains a perpetual optimist. Better days are bound to come along. And, by George, this time he may be right. It would seem that his hopes are well founded, securely resting on the shapely shoulders of his two younger daughters. Find the right husband for even one of them and prosperity is bound to trickle up. But what about the third daughter, the step daughter, mockingly nicknamed Cinderella? Certainly no great expectations there. Who would stoop to marry such an insignificant nobody?

Now I don't want to spoil things by giving away the ending, but some of you may remember bits and pieces from other sources. Something, I believe, about a fairy godmother, a pumpkin coach, white mice, a glass slipper -- all of it total fabrication for juvenile consumption, not at all, not even close to what really happened.

No, according to more reliable sources, this ongoing drama is masterminded not by a fairy godmother with a wand, but by a wise philosopher named Alidoro, also something of a magician, whom we first meet disguised as a beggar, and who in fact is the tutor of handsome young Prince Ramiro, recently home from years of travel. Stretching his tutorial responsibilities to the limit, Alidoro has taken on the task of finding a suitable bride for his compliant pupil, whose late father's will stipulates that he is to get married pronto, or else forego his inheritance. No more dithering, no more waiting around for love to come along.

Which brings us back to Don Magnifico's two younger daughters, sometimes referred to as the ugly sisters. Quite the contrary. Another departure from the truth, that calls for correction. Especially in this opera where things are often not what they seem --- the beggar, as mentioned, is in fact a philosopher, the prince is a servant, the servant is the prince --- on beholding these dazzling beauties, you might suspect that Pocket Opera is up to its old tricks, teasing your imagination, telling you not to believe what you see with your own eyes. Let me reassure you. Posing in front of their looking glass, a favorite location where they have spent many of their happiest hours, these girls are every

bit as beautiful as they look --- well, provided that you don't look too far, or too long. And when a grand ball is announced at which the prince will choose the loveliest lady in the land to be his bride, no wonder that the two sisters are all aflutter. Even Cinderella seems to catch the fever. She, too, desperately wants to go to the ball, to see for once what a royal palace is like, if only for an hour, half an hour, a quarter Obviously out of the question. Here does she get these foolish notions?? Disgrace the family with her drab attire? Please! No, back into the corner she goes! Whether she will stay put is another matter.

Scene: the considerably run-down living room of Don Magnifico's palazzo. His two daughters are indulging in their favorite pastimes, while his step-daughter Cinderella is busy with her household chores.

CLORINDA (*trying out a dance step*)

**No, no, no, no!
There's none, there's none
With a lighter foot than mine
Nor a figure so divine.**

TISBE (*before her looking glass, putting a rose first in her hair, then at her bosom*)

**Oh, yes, yes, yes!
To trim my hair --
Better here; no, better there,
Showing off a classic line.**

BOTH

**With my beauty, charm and grace
I put all in second place.**

CINDERELLA (*broom in hand, singing to herself*)

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decompressor
are needed to see this picture.

**Searching far, he found three maids,
Each of a mind to be his own.**

**What to do?
Spurning beauty, spurning pride,
He is the end chose for his bride
Simple innocence, simple innocence,
And a heart forever true.
La la la la! Li li li li!**

TISBE

Cinderella, not that song again!

More attention I require.

CLORINDA Cinderella, not that song again!
Come and tend to my attire.

CINDERELLA In my corner by the fire
Let me do my work and sing.
Long ago there lived a king . . .
Long ago there . . .

TISBE & CLOR. She drives me insane!
You are just a stupid dunce.
I insist you stop at once,
Stop at once, stop at once.

CINDERELLA Long ago there . . .

(A knock at the door)

TUTTE Who is that? Who is that?

ALIDORO *(entering, disguised as a beggar in rags)*
Pity one who's down and out.
Spare some bread for a man in need.

TISBE & CLOR. Filthy beggar! Turn him out!
Turn him out! Bread indeed!

CINDERELLA *(slipping some bread and coffee to him)*
Just a morsel. Quiet, take it!
Would it were a bigger ration.

ALIDORO By the time this day grows ashen
You will see a rising sun.

TISBE & CLOR. In the game of stirring passion
I take second place to none.

CINDERELLA How he wakens my compassion,
For he could be anyone.

CLORINDA Still intruding? Will you be gone?

TISBE Bread and butter? And coffee, too?

BOTH *(to Cinderella)* Now you'll get it. That for you! Blockhead!

CINDERELLA Is there none to take my part?

ALIDORO Show some pity, have a heart.

(A chorus of cavaliers enters)

CHORUS **O charming daughters of Don Magnifico,
The Prince Ramiro is on the way,
And to the palace he shall be your guide
To sing and dance till break of day.**

**One from the ladies there
He will decide to be
His own true bride to be,
Ever to stay.**

CLORINDA The Prince himself will come? . . .

CHORUS And will decide . . .

GIRLS And choose the loveliest? . . .

CHORUS To be his bride. *(The chorus exits.)*

(Clorinda and Tisbe are both in a twitter of excitement.)

CLORINDA Cinderella, over here!

TISBE Cinderella, over here!

CLORINDA Cinderella, to your feet!

TISBE Cinderella, I repeat.

CLORINDA Bring the brushes for my curls.

TISBE Bring my satin, silk and pearls.

CLORINDA Cinderella, to your feet!

TISBE Cinderella, on your toes!

BOTH Lay out all my newer clothes.

CINDERELLA Cinderella, over here! Cinderella, over there!

Cinderella, hurry up! Cinderella, hurry down!
Cinderella, to your feet,
Cinderella, on your toes.
Cinderella, get my clothes,
Cinderella, I repeat . . .

TISBE & CLOR.

How my heart is in a flutter!
I'm the fairest one of all,
And I'll turn his heart to butter:
Don Ramiro's bound to fall.

CINDERELLA

So it goes, each like the other,
And I'm ever at their call.
Each more selfish than the other,
I am ever at their call.
They must dance and I must suffer,
Uninvited to the ball.

ALIDORO

Scorn at present I must smother,
Though I shudder at their gall.
Soon enough they will discover
Pride is headed for a fall.

CHORUS:

How their hearts are in a flutter
Getting ready for the ball
Where they'll vie with one another
For the grandest prize of all,
To claim the grandest prize of all.
(Alidoro leaves.)

TISBE

Cinderella, hurry!
Lay out my brocade with the ribbons.

CLORINDA

My lotions and cosmetics . . .

TISBE

I'll need the diamonds.

CINDERELLA

Dear sisters, just a minute!

CLORINDA

Call us sisters? Have we not told you
Not to abuse that title?

TISBE

You've got a nerve,
Becoming so familiar.

CINDERELLA (Each day their little whims become even sillier.)

TISBE No time to lose -- an emergency!

CLORINDA Our father must be told all the excitement.

TISBE I'll go and wake him;
He must hear it from me.

CLORINDA I beg your pardon! Remember, I'm the older.

TISBE No, no! I want to tell him.

CLORINDA My dear, it's on *my* shoulder.
I shall wake him myself,
You're being petty.

TISBE I'll not be dominated!

CLORINDA Ah, he's awake already!

(Don Magnifico enters, somewhat disheveled, and greatly annoyed.)

DON MAGNIFICO Wretched daughters, shame upon you! I disown you.
O unkindness, sharper than the sting of serpents!
While I'm dreaming such a dream
You come screaming in my ear.
As I sleep, this loud disturbance --
Such a bother! Such a trouble!
(Tears upon their eyelids glisten --
Worthy daughters of a noble.)
Never mind, but hark and listen,
And the most astounding story you will hear.



In my dream as I lay nap-ping comes a vi-sion that sur- pass-es. Lo, the most su-perb of ass-es!

Lo, the most superb of asses!

Wondrous donkey, like Apollo!

Further marvels are soon to follow . . .

**As the ass grows ever bigger,
Wings appear upon his figure
Visible to any dullard,
Sprouting feathers multi-colored.**

In a flash -- whoosh! -- he's off!

Soaring upward toward a tower like an eagle,
To the summit he has flown.
There in glory, proud and regal,
He is seated on a throne.

Bells resound in celebration;
Far and wide the echoes spread,
Ding, dong, ding, dong.
But your cursed chitter chatter
Sends me leaping out of bed.
Your revolting jibber jabber
Drives a nail into my head.
Chitter chatter, jibber jabber --
It's enough to wake the dead.

Oh, your jibber and jabber,
Your chitter and chatter,
Your burble and babble,
Your yakkity-yak!
I am napping, and your yapping
Can be heard to hell and back.
Oh, your idiotic yak
Can be heard to hell and back.

But the dream's interpretation . . .
What great omen has it sent us?
Ah, what clue, what explanation
For this message so momentous?

Festive chimes and bells are booming?
Better days ahead are looming.
Feathered wings? You and you!
Flying upward? Fortune blooming.
But the ass . . . who could it be?
Ah, the finger points to me!

Who's the donkey? Plain as daylight
In a mirror of crystal glass:
Obviously I am the ass.

Soon for you a royal title!
Yes, the milk and honey flows;
Crown and money, then a dozen
Little Don Magnificos.

Little kings upon my knee --

Bravo, bravo, bravo, bravo!
And they all resemble me, me, me!
They all resemble me!

An ambassador baby,
A future MD,
A prime minister, maybe
A basso to be.
I can see as they assemble
That they all resemble me.

A physician, a banker, an elegant lord,
Politician of rank or the head to the board --
I can see as they assemble
That they all resemble me.
I can see! I can see!

CLORINDA Such news, you won't believe it!

TISBE The handsome prince Ramiro . . .

CLORINDA Three days ago. His lovely summer palace . . .

TISBE But half a mile away . . .
 He's come to stay awhile.

CLORINDA And intends to marry!

TISBE Invitations just today . . .

CLORINDA And we're expecting . . .

TISBE He's coming here in height of style . . .

CLORINDA And the fairest he will pick for a bride!

DON MAGNIFICO Daughters! A godsend! That lovely prince!
 Of course, I've never seen him.
 He invites . . . and will pick . . .
 Marry . . . the fairest . . .
 Excitement makes me dizzy!
 Cinderella, get busy!
 Bring my coffee and be quick.
 Daughters, let's face it:
 One half of our entire estate is crumbling;
 The other half has crumbled.

Be on your toes;
Put all your wits to use;
Be Play up to him and flatter;
careful, watch your p's and q's.
Spare not in dress --
The first impression's vital!
For this means nothing less
Than a royal title! *(Exeunt)*

(Prince Ramiro enters very quietly, disguised as a servant.)

PRINCE RAMIRO All looks deserted . . .
 Good people! . . . I hear no answer . . .
 As servant, I disguise my true station
 On purpose, to look and learn.
 Still no one coming? . . .
 'Twas here wise Alidoro
 Gave me reason for hoping
 I'd find, modest and domestic,
 That rare and lovely girl
 I seek to marry.

 To wed! But without love's joys.
 Ah, law majestic!
 In the flower of springtime
 I am compelled to make such a choice!
 I'll look, I'll listen . . .

(Cinderella enters carrying a tray which she drops in surprise on seeing the stranger.)

CINDERELLA Long ago there lived a . . .
 Ah! How clumsy!

PRINCE RAMIRO Something wrong?

CINDERELLA I didn't see you.

PRINCE RAMIRO Do I appear such a monster?

CINDERELLA Yes! . . . No, far from it . . .

PRINCE RAMIRO

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decompressor
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CINDERELLA I would know, and yet know not
Why my heart so soars on high.

PRINCE RAMIRO I would tell her, but yet am bashful . . .

CINDERELLA I am silent, though would be candid . . .

PRINCE RAMIRO Something graceful, something enchanted
Glow and sparkles as she gazes.

CINDERELLA Something graceful, something enchanted
Glow and sparkles as he gazes.
As he smiles, how sweet his face is!
Hope calms my spirit
And warms my heart.

PRINCE RAMIRO As she smiles, how sweet her face is!
Hope calms my spirit and warms my heart.

(to Cinderella) I am seeking the baron's daughters.
Kindly tell me, are these the quarters?

CINDERELLA They are in their room at present,
Getting ready for receiving.
Here they're coming. (And hope is leaving.)

PRINCE RAMIRO Wait a moment . . . Please, who are you?

CINDERELLA I? Who am I? Ah, who can say?

PRINCE RAMIRO You're uncertain?

CINDERELLA In a way . . .

PRINCE RAMIRO Open question?

CINDERELLA In a way . . .
I've a father not my father,
Sisters neither fully sisters,
Mother being widow rather,
Mother also of my sisters.
But my father's overbearing,
Often seems to be uncaring.
(Oh, the nonsense I have prattled!
He can see that I am rattled.

Ah, forgive and pardon me, sir,
For my plain and simple ways.

PRINCE RAMIRO I'm enchanted, I'm enamored
Of these plain and simple ways.

CLOR. & TISBE (*from outside*) Cinderella! Cinderella!
Come here! Come here!
To me! To me!

PRINCE RAMIRO Is there something much amiss?
Why else would they call like this?

CINDERELLA From the corners of the compass,
From the mountain to the ocean,
Night and day they raise a rumpus,
Ever, ever after me.

PRINCE RAMIRO (Face and manner so angelic
Work upon me like a potion.
To the rafters I would tell it:
Nevermore shall I be free.)

CINDERELLA Goodbye, goodbye, sir.

CLOR. & TISBE Cinderella!

CINDERELLA Coming, coming.
(But my heart I leave behind me,
Happy heart no more my own,
Heart no longer mine alone.)

PRINCE RAMIRO (So angelic, unpretentious . . .
Ah, my heart I leave behind me,
Stolen heart no more mine own.
But my heart I leave behind me
I no longer call my own.) (*Cinderella leaves.*)

PRINCE RAMIRO (*alone*) I'm lost for words . . .
How can a face so lovely
Be imprisoned in such rags?
But Don Magnifico's the one I want to see.
I must inform him
The pseudo-prince, the counterfeit, approaches.
What a splendid idea!
While passing as a valet,

More freely I'll observe these females as they truly are.
Dandini meanwhile playing *my* part as royalty . . .

(Don Magnifico enters.)

DON MAGNIFICO I crave, beseech, I beg a thousand pardons!
Oh! You're not His Royal Highness!

PRINCE RAMIRO He's soon arriving.

DON MAGNIFICO But when?

PRINCE RAMIRO Within three minutes.

DON MAGNIFICO In three minutes!
Ah, daughters, do hurry up! . . . Words wasted.
I'll go and give a prod.
Frankly, I should know the girls by now -- dear God!
It takes them both forever
To put a dress on. *(He hurries out.)*

PRINCE RAMIRO What a blockhead! What a noise!
Something tells me
Here comes Dandini.

(The Chorus enters with great fanfare.)

CHORUS: **Onward to wed without delay,
For time is swift in flight.
Yours is a royal family
Whose flame you must relight.**

(Dandini enters disguised as the prince.)

DANDINI: **As the bee in the budding of April
Brushes lightly, flies on, and reposes
On the lily, then samples the roses
And calls upon the pale columbine,
Flower to flower thus fleetly I hover,
Ever tasting, but never, never finding
That sweet nectar of true love ever binding
From the blossom that only is mine.**

(Clorinda, Tisbe and Don Magnifico make an equally grand entrance.)

CLORINDA *(to Dandini)* Your Highness!

TISBE (*to Dandini*) Your Highness!

BOTH So great is the honor!

DON MAGNIFICO Oh, your presence alone overwhelms us!

DANDINI Just my nature. Nothing to it.
 (*admiring the sisters*) So graceful! So charming!
 (*to Prince Ramiro*) Have I talent? Sound convincing?
 Papa to a tee! Papa to a tee!

PRINCE RAMIRO (Rascal, look out!
 Keep your distance from me.)

DANDINI Have a heart!
 **Ladies, lower those dazzling windows.
 In their blaze I am turned to a cinder.
 To their volley, enrapt I surrender;
 I am won, taken captive by fire.
 So graceful! So charming!
 Papa to a tee! Papa to a tee!**

 (Though the king for a day is a comic,
 Astronomic the tumble to come.
 Never fear, when I take off the mask -- oh, oh!
 Fiasco, fiasco for some.)

CLOR. & TISBE (From his gazes, the frenzy, the fawning,
 I have got him, he's under my thumb.)

DON MAGNIFICO (In the bag! Oh, he's just where we want him!
 Sound the trumpet! Rejoice to the drum!)

PRINCE RAMIRO (Ah, those eyes so appealing, so haunting!
 I can only observe and be mum.
 (Ah, those eyes so appealing!
 To their beauty I freely succumb.)

DANDINI (Have I talent?)

PRINCE RAMIRO (Rascal!)

DANDINI (Royal!)

CHORUS Onward to wed without delay,

For time is swift in flight . . .

- DANDINI (*to Don Magnifico*) Your daughters leave me speechless!
Masterpieces! Botticelli! Da Vinci!
The one is gorgeous, the other devastating.
Ah, stands to reason . . .
Look at their father.
- CLORINDA Too kind.
- DON MAGNIFICO A man of perfect taste!
What praises! You confuse me, overwhelm me!
- DANDINI Authentic Grecian portraits! (How is that one?)
- PRINCE RAMIRO (You needn't overdo it.)
- DANDINI (So grandly elevated,
I must think upward
And only tell tall tales.)
- DON MAGNIFICO (I think you've got him!
Hang in, don't let him get away.)
- DANDINI Now winding up the affair that I debated
Before so devastated:
Home at last from travels, educated,
I find Papa capitulated
And to the graveyard already relegated.
He, expiring, stipulated
That to preserve the royal line I must get mated,
Or have all confiscated.
So my invitation to the ball is circulated.
If I find a tasty catch, my hook is baited;
For me that fish is fated.
I said it, I said it!
Though it's all so complicated . . .
- DON MAGNIFICO (He even speaks like Dante!)
- DANDINI Ah, gorgeous ladies! Too long I've ignored you.
If you'll extend an arm,
My nobles will escort you.
The coach is waiting.
- CLORINDA My pleasure.

Miss Patches! Too ridiculous!
Look at her! Look at her!
Wants to go with us! No!
Not in a million years.
Come, let's be off, it's time to start.

DANDINI (We're going, or are we staying?)

PRINCE RAMIRO (Her pleading tears my heart.)

CINDERELLA But half an hour . . . a quarter . . .

DON MAGNIFICO Leave off, be quick. Beware my stick.

DANDINI & RAMIRO Oh, spare her!

DON MAGNIFICO *(to Dandini)* Pardon, pardon us!
(to Cinderella) Be off, I say; you're in the way.
(to Dandini) Ah, so scandalous!
For her I must apologize --
A servant who would fraternize.

DANDINI & RAMIRO Servant? Servant?

CINDERELLA He means . . .

DON MAGNIFICO The lowest type!
We'd best ignore the guttersnipe.
With fuss and ostentation
The girl forgets her station.
The servant -- oh, the upstart! --
Believes she's some relation.

(to Cinderella) Upstairs with you, there's work to do,
The kettle that needs tending to,
The stove to clean, the chimney flue --
Allow some time to sweep.
Can we afford free room and board?
Go up and earn your keep.

PRINCE RAMIRO (I barely can control my rage.
This man deserves the axe.)

DANDINI Lay off her, dear Magnifico.
I advise you to relax;
You had best relax.

CINDERELLA Forever in the corner,
Must I remain in rags?
Kind sirs, oh persuade him to let me go!
One time, that's all I ask . . .

(Alidoro enters.)

ALIDORO Here in the register each name's recorded.
Under Magnifico, three names are noted,
Three daughters listed.
Now that the Prince, to preserve lineality,
Chooses to wed from his own principality,
We must demand you produce the third one.

DON MAGNIFICO An extra daughter? . . . Do I understand you?
Another?

ALIDORO Where is the third!

DON MAGNIFICO Ah, yes! She died!

ALIDORO That in the register
Does not appear.

CINDERELLA (Could they refer to me?
They must refer to me!)
No, no! Here I am!

DON MAGNIFICO Stay out of this and hold your tongue!

ALIDORO The book is clear.

DON MAGNIFICO *(to Cinderella)* If you but whisper,
If you but breathe,
I'll have you hung.

PRINCE RAMIRO Your daughter died?

DANDINI Your daughter died?

DON MAGNIFICO The angel . . . the angel . . . died young.

**Who knows if truth will out?
Their eyes of wonder
Reveal the storm of doubt,**

**The fear of blunder
That blows them to and fro
And roundabout.**

- OTHERS VARIOUSLY Muzzled though mystified,
In fear of blunder,
Queasy, uneasy, no wonder
They stagger to and fro,
Hither and yon
And roundabout.
- DON MAGNIFICO A murmur heard from you,
Another word from you,
There will be hell to pay --
Need I repeat? Need I repeat?
- CINDERELLA Oh, lend a hand to me!
Do not abandon me,
Oh, noble gentlemen,
I do entreat! I do entreat!
- ALIDORO Sheer pandemonium!
Silence is golden.
Scandal is bound to come --
Pray be discreet.
- PRINCE RAMIRO Observing cruelty,
Fury takes over me.
I melt in sympathy
For one so sweet.
- DANDINI Discarding livery
To play His Majesty,
The role of royalty
Is hard to beat.
- (Prince Ramiro, Dandini and Don Magnifico depart.)*
- ALIDORO *(remaining behind with Cinderella)*
For beauty, sparkle and allure
You need but step around the corner.
But a heart kind and gentle
You will not find without a lot of looking.
Ah, so the world goes! Daughter . . .
- CINDERELLA Daughter! Do you mean *me*?

The years I've waited
For my own proud step-father to call me by that name!

ALIDORO

Be patient. Meanwhile, come with me.
A golden coach is soon to arrive for both of us
To take us to the palace.

CINDERELLA

But in these rags?
The latest thing from Paris!
You little better!

ALIDORO

Listen closely and trust me.
Diamonds and sapphires
I myself shall provide,
A gown of velvet,
Slippers spun out of glass,
On this condition:
Your name must stay a secret
And you must leave before the stroke of twelve.

CINDERELLA

Can this be magic,
Or am I simply dreaming?

ALIDORO

Dearest daughter, I'm indeed a magician.
But in truth, who is to say
What is real, what illusion?]

**All the world's but a stage,
All people merely players
Unpeeling sundry layers
That wind about the soul.**

**The clown, the fool, the beggar,
Insulted and berated,
May be tomorrow slated
To play the leading role.**

**Enshrouded in a mystery
No human eye can penetrate
Is handed down that destiny
Each mortal shall portray.**

**Closer and closer, thunder-like,
I hear a coach arriving.
Toward love soon it will be driving
With you upon your way.**

**Into the night be driving
With you upon your way.**

(Taking her by the hand, he escorts her out.)

From this disheartening scene of decline and decay, we move to luxury and splendor, the brilliantly illuminated formal garden adjoining the sumptuous palace of Prince Ramiro, soon to become king. Be it noted that he is still wisely masquerading as a servant in order to observe more accurately the ladies as they really are. Here Don Magnifico has good reason to feel smug. Holding two winning cards, darling Clorinda and adorable Tisbe, clearly in his element, he is already looking around with a proprietary eye. The girls are delivering a knock-out performance, showing off their most winsome charms, albeit undermined somewhat by the determination of each to outshine the other.

As helpless spectators, what can we do? However much we may long to jump from our seats and cry out: “Sisters, slow down! He’s not the prince! You’re barking up the wrong tree!” we can only watch in horror as the reckless girls race blindly down the precipitous road that leads inexorably to a crash. One is reminded of Greek tragedy.

Meanwhile, Dandini and the prince compare notes.

Scene: Prince Ramiro’s palace. Dandini, Don Magnifico and the two sisters are present.

DANDINI

But bravo, bravo, bravo!
Learned friend, dear Don Magnifico!
On vintages and labels,
Fine liqueurs, imported and domestic,
All matters alcoholic,
You are encyclopedic,
A dedicated scholar!

Our cellar you must sample.
After thirty swallows
If you still are sober,
I shall name you
High Honorary Steward of the Cellar!

DON MAGNIFICO *(aside to his daughters)* Daughters! You notice!

What a clear-cut indication!
I trust you’ve guessed
The reason for my citation.
Dear Clorinda! Sweet Tisbe!
You entertain the Prince.
I’m to the cellar!

(exit)

CHORUS

Whereas, because, in that
He has drunk enough for four
And has not yet fallen flat
But is back again for more,
From the king this comes to pass:
We apoint him overseer,
Supervisor of the glass.
Call him czar of wine and beer.
Him we name, to say the least,
Lord and master of the feast.
Gather round him, strike a stance;
Hands together, start the dance.

DON MAGNIFICO

Supervisor! Overseer!
Lord and master! I'm content.
Pleasure! Pleasure! Cheers to you.
You have found my native bent;
Here's the work I like to do.

Put up a bulletin,
Stated precisely --
Six thousand copies
Should do us nicely.

CHORUS

Eager with writing pen,
Ready we wait.
Give the communiqué,
Elucidate!

DON MAGNIFICO

We, Don Magnifico --
Bigger! All in capitols.
Blockhead! In capitols!
We, Don Magnifico,
By patrimony
Proud Duke and Baron of Montefiascone,
New supervisor,
With titles various,
Steward, et cetera,
In full authority
Make this decree.
All you inebriates
Hear this from me:

Crime most nefarious,
Mixing or sprinkling

Even an inkling
Of water in wine.
Culprits are ordered
Hanged, drawn and quartered,
Are ordered drawn and quartered.

Hereby et cetera,
Wherefore et cetera,
Dated et cetera,
Baron et cetera . . .

CHORUS Baron et cetera . . .
Here you can sign.

DON MAGNIFICO Go then and poster it
All over town.
Let no teetotaler
Dare pull it down.

CHORUS Off to the festival,
Feasting and merriment,
A bill of fare magnificent,
Soberness there to be
Subject to fine.
The prig, the prude
Are out of line.

DON MAGNIFICO There we shall offer
A prize to the best of all:
Here's to the invincible
Drinker of wine.

Prizes and praises
For major accomplishment
Go to the invincible
Drinker of wine.
Prizes on principle
Go to the invincible
Drinker of wine.
A cheer for wine!

(Exeunt)

Prince Ramiro and Dandini enter.

PRINCE RAMIRO

QuickTime™ and a
decompressor
are needed to see this picture.

Tell me all you have discovered,
Be unsparing and precise.

From your post of observation
Have you any indication
Of their character formation?
Be unsparing and precise.

Zip it, zip it! Quiet, quiet!
Do not fudge or falsify it,
Be unsparing and precise.
Tell me all you have discovered,
Honesty at any price.

DANDINI

On the quiet, and off the record,
Under cover, surreptitious;
Both the girls are vain and vicious,
Hard as nails, cold as ice.

QuickTime™ and a
decompressor
are needed to see this picture.

Both are full of affectation,
Hard as nails, cold as ice.

They are lazy and malicious,
Hard as nails, cold as ice.
Silly, shallow, vain and vicious --
Otherwise they're very nice.

PRINCE RAMIRO

Alidoro clearly hinted
Of another daughter beggared . . .

DANDINI

Ah, the maestro's quite demented,
Oh, the fellow is a fool!
He's spent too much time in school.

PRINCE RAMIRO

Both together worth a feather,
He they marry's sure to lose.

DANDINI

Each as shifty as the weather --
Not the wife that I would choose.
Off the record, off the record,

We'll continue with the ruse,
And continue to play the part.

PRINCE RAMIRO Zip it, zip it! Quiet, quiet!
And continue with the ruse,
And continue to play the part.

CLORINDA (*entering*) Prince Charming! You beckoned?

TISBE (*entering*) Prince Charming! You beckoned?

BOTH How can I survive for one more second?
On your answer, on your promise I depend.

TISBE I am longing . . .

CLORINDA How I languish . . .

TISBE I am pining . . .

BOTH I'm in anguish.

DANDINI Girls, I'll have to toss a penny;
Two to wed is one too many.
Bigamy is not the trend;
This I do not recommend.
One I'll marry . . .

CLORINDA The other?

TISBE The other?

DANDINI The other, the other . . .
(*pointing to Ramiro*) I shall offer to my friend!

GIRLS No, no, no, no, no!
Not a lackey! Alas! Alas!

PRINCE RAMIRO You will find me sweet and loving.

CLORINDA Not a lackey! No, sir, never!
I'll have none so crude and crass.

PRINCE RAMIRO I've a nature warm and tender.

TISBE Wed a lackey? No, sir, never!

How obscenely lower class.

PRINCE RAMIRO Fond and loving . . . warm and tender . . .

CLORINDA Surely no one so plebeian!

TISBE Common, plain and ordinary.

BOTH Sir, I'd rather die than marry.
I get sick just as the thought.
Oh, I sicken at the thought.

DANDINI & RAMIRO (Two are taken all unwary;
Thus with cream the cat is caught.)

CHORUS (*offstage*) Enter, Milady. You hesitate.
Go ahead, they all await.
Alidoro enters.

PRINCE RAMIRO Wise and honored Alidoro,
What confusion at the gate?

ALIDORO: Unknown woman come alone;
Over her eyes a veil is thrown.

CLOR. & TISBE Unknown woman?

ALIDORO All alone . . .

CLOR. & TISBE Ah, but who?

ALIDORO I cannot tell.

CLOR. & TISBE Is she pretty?

ALIDORO Up to you.

DANDINI & RAMIRO Who can it be?

ALIDORO She's known to none.

CLORINDA You've not a clue?

ALIDORO Not even one.

TUTTI Ah! (*general consternation*)

CLORINDA (My tongue is tied, I stammer.
I try to speak but fail.
It must be a hoax -- oh, damn her!
Surprise has turned me pale.

PRINCE RAMIRO, then CINDERELLA, then DANDINI

My tongue is tied, I waver.
I try to speak but fail.
Oh, wondrous sight to savor!
Her/his eyes have turned me pale.

ALIDORO My tongue is tied, I falter.
I try to speak but fail.
This love will reach the altar,
Just like the fairy tale.

Don Magnifico enters, and is soon electrified.

DON MAGNIFICO Your Royal Highness! Suppertime!
What? How? Who? Yes? What? The devil!
My, what a strange coincidence!
A bit like Cinderella, no?

TISBE Perhaps on first impression.

CLORINDA On closer observation . . .

TISBE Our sister's plain and clumsy . . .

CLORINDA But frankly just between us,
She, too, is not a Venus
And I'm not at all upset.

DON MAGNIFICO (Home ever with the dusting pan,
Her clothes, the rags she accumulates . . .)

CINDERELLA (The old man is afraid to guess.)

PRINCE RAMIRO (A glance from her intoxicates.)

DANDINI Come, come! We are not statuettes!
For those with hearty appetite

Scene: a room in Prince Ramiro's palazzo. Don Magnifico is in consultation with his daughters.

DON MAGNIFICO I have a funny feeling
 They're laughing up their sleeves.
 The royal rascals!
 A pox upon all princes!
 Those mongrels I could murder.

TISBE Papa, control your temper.

DON MAGNIFICO I thought we had it,
 An offer in the bag!
 Then out of nowhere
 Comes little Miss Anonymous.

CLORINDA You amuse me!
 You think this unknown creature has a chance?
 Why, she has no more sex appeal
 Than Cinderella!

DON MAGNIFICO Oh, daughters, daughters!
 On you I put my money.

**Daughters, one of you is headed
For a throne of royal splendor.
Don't abandon, don't abandon when you're wedded
Your magnificent Papa.**

**As I'm entering the palace
There's a gentleman awaiting.
Bowing, with a bit of scraping,
He commences: "Worthy baron,
Could you have your daughter listen
To a personal petition?"**

**Take it, nonsense! But a pittance!
You would hurt me to refuse it.
Merely silver, you'll excuse it,
But this time I must insist."
I'm reluctant, must think it over.
More silver pieces? We're agreed, sir!
To the palace pray proceed, sir!
To the palace pray proceed.**

Now appears a silken bonnet --
(Never say I frown upon it.)
Rather young and very pretty,
Hoping for a bit of pity,
“Baron darling, baron darling!
That affair so confidential,
If you could be influential . . .”

So I remind her,
Coin makes the heart grow kinder.
Little present, may we call it?
Ah, I see you understand!
After searching in her wallet
She extends an empty hand.

But she’s charming, and I am gallant:
“At your service I place my talent.
To my chamber, pray proceed, ma’am!
To my chamber, pray proceed.”

Noon at last I wake from slumbers
And my bell has barely sounded
When I find myself surrounded
By an army vast in numbers:
So you wish me to solicit?
For a fee, just say what is it.
Shady deal and share the profit?
Pleasure, sir, think nothing of it.
Legal benefits at random?
I’m the fellow that can land ’em.
You require a hunting permit?
For a favor I’ll confirm it.

So a flood of applications
From a mass of poor relations.
I in turn am then presented
Cotton, linen, silk and gingham.
Over land and sea they bring ’em,
Fur of seal and rare chinchilla,
Tea and spices from Manilla,
Shiny satin and brocade.

Soon a palace full of presents:
Potted plants and fatted pheasants,
Rhenish wine, imported brandy,
Turkish coffee, local candy.

**By the caravan they're coming,
Bringing luster and allure up
From the southern tip of Europe
To the man who has it made.**

**But enough, enough, enough!
Away, you peasants! No more presents!
And to hell with fatted pheasants.
Fool to ask it, take your basket!
No more show now, time to go now.
Hurry! Run! Prestissimo!**

**Barricade the door and lock it,
Hide the key inside my pocket.
Off, you peasants! No more presents!
Beat it! Beat it! Off you go!
Vanish, disappear before I change yes to no.
Beat it! Beat it! Off you go!
Off you go! Off you go!** *(Exeunt)*

(Prince Ramiro enters.)

PRINCE RAMIRO Uncanny, the resemblance
Of this strange and unknown beauty
To the ragged creature
Who moved me so this morning.
She stirs and excites me,
Awaking unknown feelings.
Even Dandini is in the same condition.
Here they come!
I shall conceal myself and listen.

(Cinderella enters, with Dandini following close on her heels.)

DANDINI Don't run away, but hear me!
Up and down the gallery
Four times you've had me weaving.

CINDERELLA I insist you change the subject,
Or I am leaving.

DANDINI But why? To speak of loving, adoring . . .
Is this abusive?

CINDERELLA But what's the use if . . .
If my heart is taken?

(For alternative version, see Appendix.)

PRINCE RAMIRO Dandini, any comment?

DANDINI Was ever comedown greater?
Poor me! A former prince,
Now mere spectator.

PRINCE RAMIRO “So then . . . if you still want me,
I’ll not resist . . .”
What’s the clue to this riddle?
Alidoro enters.

PRINCE RAMIRO Ah, learned master, whom I’ve long venerated!
My heart is weighted
With love past all compare.
What shall I do now?

ALIDORO *(after reflection)* Faint heart never won the fair! *(Exit)*

PRINCE RAMIRO *(to Dandini)* You play the prince no longer!
Clear the palace,
Get rid of all these idiots. *(Dandini leaves.)*
My horses! I’ll scour and comb the country.
I leave this minute
To gallop like the wind,
Breaking the limit!

**Now no repose till I find her!
For love will spur and taunt me,
And no barricade shall daunt me
Until she’s mine for good.**

(to the bracelet, or slipper)

**Dainty, O delicate token,
Rare comfort you provide me,
A key and a clue that shall guide me
To her I so adore.
Pilot my course and guide me
To her I adore with all my heart.**

CHORUS **Comfort and key to guide,
Pilot and steer the course.**

PRINCE RAMIRO
(*With chorus*)

**We're off an eager,
No time to flounder!
We fly to seek her
Until we've found her.**

**Hope brightly feathered,
Fear cold and icy,
Warring together,
Tear me apart.
Love, steer and guide me;
Oh, draw me a chart.**

(*Exeunt*)

DANDINI (*entering*)

So I'm nothing but an *ex*!
From Prince to Pauper . . .
How the mighty have fallen!
What a setback!
No question, being king rather suits me.

Don Magnifico rushes in, breathless.

DON MAGNIFICO

My nervous sweat you'll pardon!
The girls are both in torment,
Giddy with expectation.
So if only you'd hasten your decision . . .

DANDINI

It's settled. I've chosen.

DON MAGNIFICO

You've chosen? Oh, tell me all!
Hurry! Speak freely! You've chosen!
One of my rosebuds will come to blossom
In surroundings so splendid?

DANDINI

One and all will know it later,
But now it's strictly secret.

DON MAGNIFICO

Which is it? Which is it?
Dear Clorinda? Darling Tisbe?

DANDINI

Soon enough I'll reveal it.

DON MAGNIFICO

Papa, though, you can tell.

DANDINI

It goes no further?

DON MAGNIFICO

Most certainly. Say it quickly!

Surely you are far the wiser.
Say, were I to wed your daughter,
What should she expect of me?

DON MAGNIFICO

(Lo, already state adviser!)
Sir, you've cured my native shyness.
Listen closely, Royal Highness,
For I count you family.

You must not embark on marriage
Minus golden coach and carriage.
At the least 'twill be expected
Forty maids, a score of valets,
Arab horses in the stable,
Silver goblets on the table,
Viands for the finest palates
As befitting the elite.

DANDINI

Our ideas seem to differ.
If we marry, I could give her
Not the banquet you're describing
But a meal of cold remainders.
Neither feasting nor imbibing
Is allowed in servant chambers,
And we travel on our feet.

DON MAGNIFICO

Ha! You're joking!

DANDINI

Ah, correction!

DON MAGNIFICO

This regalia?

DANDINI

A bit of fiction.

Not to stand on ceremony,
As a prince I'm but a phony.
And the true prince comes to town today,
So it's time I throw the mask away.
With a sigh of resignation
I resume my old vocation.
Meet Dandini, groom and lackey!
Meet Dandini, prince of valets!
Master barber, just the man for you --
Have a haircut, shave and shampoo.

DON MAGNIFICO Have a haircut, shave and shampoo!!!!
Do you suppose
That I am the man, sir,
Meekly to stand
A punch on the nose, sir?
Wait till the prince appears!
He is to answer, he is to answer.

DANDINI You know but half of it --
Wait and grow wiser,
Later to laugh at it;
That I advise, sir.
Better to dry the tears!
Go while you can, sir,
Go while you can, sir.

DON MAGNIFICO Forcing me out?

DANDINI Forcing you out.

DON MAGNIFICO Here I shall stay.

DANDINI Out of my way!

DON MAGNIFICO Impersonator!

DANDINI Settle it later.

DON MAGNIFICO I want an answer.

DANDINI Go while you can, sir.

DON MAGNIFICO I dare you try to make me budge.

DANDINI You'll change your tune if I'm the judge.

DON MAGNIFICO Shove me around, sir?

DANDINI I am the bouncer.
Here is a stick you'd better obey.
I've got a stick that you'd best obey.
Out of the way! Out of the way!

DON MAGNIFICO Here I shall stay! Here I shall stay!

I'd take a slug at him --

Oh, what a tumble!
Shot, catapulted
All the way down.
Grossly insulted, --
Shame, ruination!
No way of saving
My reputation.

Look at him, look at him!
Hear them come chaffing,
Jeering and laughing
All over town.

DANDINI

Fortune has struck at him,
Tossed him a tumble.
Easy to fumble,
Grabbing a crown.
Baron, stop raving,
Listen to reason:
Should you need shaving.
Shampoo or manicure,
Cutting or styling,
I shall come smiling.
Look at him, look at him!
Look at the clown,
The local clown! *(They both leave.)*

ALIDORO *(entering)*

What I've started by magic,
Love will continue;
Leave the next step to nature.
The horses gallop
With the prince in the saddle.
The wild and stormy night
But spurs him onward.
With the power of illusion --
That special magic --
Now from the palace let us journey
And overtake the prince
Who through the night is riding
To reach the place where love
Still waits in hiding.

Scene: Again, the house of Don Magnifico. Cinderella is alone.

CINDERELLA

Long ago there lived a king

Who grew weary, weary living all alone.
Searching far, he found three maids,
Each of a mind to be his own.

What to do?
Spurning beauty, spurning pride,
He is the end chose for his bride
Simple innocence, simple innocence,
And a heart forever true.
La la la la! Li li li li!
La la la la!

A simple servant, and yet to my mind
More royal than the king
And his courtiers combined.

What a noise!
They're coming, and no warning!
I thought they would be dancing
At least till morning.

Don Magnifico returns with the two daughters.

CLORINDA	You see, she hasn't budged!
DON MAGNIFICO	But fantastic, fantastic! Two peas in a pod, a sloppy copy, For anyone can see Ours came out smudged. Your chores are finished?
CINDERELLA	Finished. But why the angry twitch? Is anything askew?
DON MAGNIFICO	Because . . . because . . . We ran into a witch Who looks a lot like you!
CLORINDA	Oh, she is so provoking! I'd like to smack her.
CINDERELLA	Sister, you must be joking . . . What did I ever do? <i>(She leaves.)</i>

The first faint rumble of a storm is heard.

DON MAGNIFICO To the prince, little stupid!
 He's over there.

CINDERELLA This man . . . Prince Ramiro?
 Can it be?

She starts to rush out in confusion.

PRINCE RAMIRO Oh, stop her!
 Yes, it's the bracelet!
 I've found her! My search is over!

My beloved!

CINDERELLA Prince . . . am I dreaming?

CLORINDA & TISBE Had I known it!

DANDINI Tra la la la la . . .

DON MAGNIFICO But . . .

PRINCE RAMIRO Be quiet!

DON MAGNIFICO (A blow for Papa.) If ---

PRINCE RAMIRO Be silent!

TUTTI Had I/they known!

SEXTET. *Each in turn.*

QuickTime™ and a
 decompressor
 are needed to see this picture.

**Strain increases, tension heightens;
 As we tug, we knot retightens.**

**Groping, grappling, still more baffling.
 Each solution starts unraveling.
 Raptly wrestling with this riddle,
 In the middle, I'm entrapped.**

CLORINDA *(to Cinderella)* Stupid creature! Girl of the gutter!
 What pretension! What presumption!

Your ill-breeding makes me shudder.
Oh, how dare you mix with us?

DON MAGNIFICO Saucy servant! And on what basis
Do you appear among your betters?
Go, the kitchen's where your place is.
There return without a fuss.

PRINCE RAMIRO Oh, you wretches! So blind to merit,
You insult the one I adore so.
Rage and wrath will fall, I swear it.
Tremble, daughters and Papa.

DANDINI You remember, I foretold it:
There would come an end to laughter.
Tragic tears would follow after;
Come the second act, voila!

CLORINDA & TISBE I am frozen.

DON MAGNIFICO I am rigid.

DANDINI Thus an easy way is shown
To kill three birds with one stone.

MAGN., CLOR. & TISBE But a servant . . .

PRINCE RAMIRO Enough! Be silent!
You offend my very soul,
And my fury I'll not control.

CINDERELLA Ah, my Lord! If I have lighted
Some faint spark of love within you,
Render mercy, with love united.
Grant them pardon -- this I beg.

DANDINI & RAMIRO Tears that from her eyes are falling
Ought to take them down a peg.

MAGN., CLOR. & TISBE What a hypocrite, how galling!
I would like to wring her neck.

DON MAGNIFICO Your Highness, what's the reason
Behind this merry-making?

PRINCE RAMIRO Quiet! First, let there be no mistaking;

Here is the girl I have chosen.

CLORINDA & TISBE
(to Cinderella) Ha, ha! The joke is obvious.
You can't believe he's serious?

PRINCE RAMIRO I love her, I love her!
She shall be mine.

DON MAGNIFICO But do you not suppose, sir,
Perhaps *another* daughter? . . .

PRINCE RAMIRO Already they said no, sir.
For I am so plebeian,
So plain and ordinary.

DANDINI The wheel has spun, the dice are shaken,
Every ball has found its slot.
The bets have all been taken:
Lo! The winner of the pot!
Behold the winner who gets the pot.

PRINCE RAMIRO *(to Cinderella)*
Join me, king and queen,
Reigning together.

CINDERELLA *(to her father and sisters)*
Old malice now discarding,
Allow me a kiss in parting.

DON MAGNIFICO To blazes!

CLORINDA & TISBE No, how dare you!

PRINCE RAMIRO Vipers, I shall not spare you!
Tremble before my wrath.

CINDERELLA Where am I? What land enchanted?
Can my bliss be overtaken?
If I dream, oh be it granted
That I never again awaken.
Joy too great for words to utter;
I would speak, but only sigh.

OTHERS Clash of tongue, and moan and mutter;
Storm of passion, groan and grumble;
Here a stammer, there a stutter,
Some to topple, some to tumble.

How his/my heart is in a flutter;
All his/my hopes have gone awry.

PRINCE RAMIRO Follow, and you shall reign as well as I.

DANDINI Follow, and brighter days I prophesy.

(All leave except Clorinda.)

CLORINDA [Scorned and discarded!
Like a torn and crumpled wrapper.
Woe is me!
Far from perching high upon a throne,
I'm not offered a rag or bone, no!
Nor a single tiny drop of sympathy.

But no matter! So it goes.
I'm a rosebush still in flower,
And there's many a handsome fellow.
If I ply my talents well, oh
I shall land a husband yet.
Though a hope has here turned sour,
There are others for my net.] *(Exit)*

Alidoro steps forth.

ALIDORO Little more . . . my work is ending.
My magic powers have triumphed once again.
A wrong prevented,
And my dear pupil so well contented,
True merit prevails, and love shall reign.
Not bad for one day . . .

Scene: the Royal Palace.

CHORUS Fortune so prone to inconstancy
Often rises only to plummet.
May for you the wheel of destiny
Stay suspended at the summit.
Fallen are pride and vanity,
And kindness reigns supreme.

PRINCE RAMIRO Dearest . . .

CINDERELLA My husband! Oh, pardon

The haze of sweet confusion,
Leaving the life I have known.
So rapid the journey
From a lonesome, long seclusion
To a royal throne
And crown of sparkling diamonds.

DON MAGNIFICO (*to Cinderella*) Your Highness!
On my knees, I implore you . . .

CINDERELLA And shall I never hear you say “My daughter”? . . .

PRINCE RAMIRO (*of the sisters*) As for these peacocks . . .

CINDERELLA Dear husband, before you in turn I kneel.
The past has vanished; may its wounds quickly heal.
I ascend the throne,
But wish a greater glory for my own.
Their wrongs I would repay
In my own way
With pardon and full forgiveness.

**Born into darkness and weeping,
In shadow I sighed and suffered.
Then as if waking from sleeping,
Like spring and sunshine discovered,
In a radiant dawn of day
All of my sorrow faded away.**

**No, no, no, no!
The tears are dry now.
Why hesitate? Why hesitate? Why, oh why?
Into my arms come racing,
Daughter, companion and sister
Ever, ever embracing in me.
Father, husband, and true friend -- oh, rapture!**

OTHERS She inspires me with her radiance
To recognize true glory,
High on a throne in glory
Yet greater than the throne.

CINDERELLA



Sad no long-er a-mong the cin-ders, there no more I'll sob a- lone -- no!

**Like a song, a dream, a winter's
Tale, my sorrows all are flown.**

OTHERS

Virtue's woes are transitory,
As our play has truly shown.

The End

APPENDIX

Alternatives for those choosing to retain the glass slipper of the original fairy tale.

Replacement Number 1

Beginning on p. 35 at "Don't try to follow" through "What's the clue to this riddle?"

(As Cinderella leaves in haste, she loses her glass slipper.)

PRINCE RAMIRO

I'm not to follow?
What to make of it?
On the stroke of midnight,
The way she fled in a panic!

(finding the slipper)

What is this?
She must have lost it . . . a tiny slipper.
Dandini, any comment?

DANDINI

Too bad you didn't stop her.
Poor me! A former prince,
Now mere eavesdropper.

PRINCE RAMIRO

"Stay here . . . this I command you . . .
And do not follow . . ."
What's the clue to this riddle?

Replacement Number 2

Beginning on p. 43 after the storm through “My search is over” on p. 44.

Dandini enters, followed by Prince Ramiro.

DANDINI The prince has ordered every girl in the land
To try on this slipper . . .
(seeing Don Magnifico) Old acquaintance!

DON MAGNIFICO Oh, you again.
You come without the prince?

DANDINI *(indicating Ramiro)* You don’t recognize him?

DON MAGNIFICO Not the valet!
Ah, this changes . . .

PRINCE RAMIRO I have no time to linger.
At once, go and call your daughters.

DON MAGNIFICO An honor! A distinction!
At your service . . .

(to his daughters) Girls, be quick!
A blessing from the blue!
The prince by now has chosen --
It’s one of you!

(INSERT)

CLORINDA & TISBE, *entering.*

Darling, sweet Papa! Did you call?

DANDINI Miss Clorinda, you first of all.
If you would be so kind,
Try on this slipper.

CLORINDA *(making a vain attempt)* So comfortable.

DANDINI Three sizes off!
You turn is next, Miss Tisbe.
Your foot, if you please.

TISBE *(similarly)* Perfect. Ow!

