

By Alexi Alfieri

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WHAT HAPPENED AFTER ONCE UPON A TIME

By ALEXI ALFIERI

CAST OF CHARACTERS (In Order of Appearance)

	<u># of lines</u>
STORYTELLERa determined substitute	194
CINDERELLA clean freak	22
RAPUNZEL diva	27
FIRST PIG hypochondriac allergic to straw	10
WOLF English gentleman	13
SECOND PIG hypochondriac with a bad back	9
THIRD PIG hypochondriac suffering from depression	5
HANSELall boy	34
GRETELall girl	35
JACKloser	26
KINGditzy	17
QUEEN confused	21
PRINCESS forgetful	8
LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD lawyer	26
HAPPY mischievous leader of the Seve Dwarfs	n 12
DOPEY clueless dwarf	3
SLEEPYsleepy dwarf	3
SNEEZY sneezy dwarf	3
SNOW WHITE stern mother	9
DOCnerdy dwarf	3
BASHFULshy dwarf	3
GRUMPY grouchy dwarf	6
GOLDILOCKSscaredy-cat	23
BABY BEAR trying to be a grown-up bear	5

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The background is a brick wall with fairytale graffiti all over it, such as "For Legal Advice, Call Red!" or "Jack was here!" or "Rapunzel the Beautiful." There's a chair UP RIGHT facing the audience for the storyteller. Beside the chair, books with titles visible in large print should be stacked in the following descending order: "Cinderella," "Rapunzel," "The Three Little Pigs," "Hansel and Gretel," "Jack and the Beanstalk," "The Princess and the Pea," "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs," "Little Red Riding Hood," and "Goldilocks and the

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

Scene breaks are for rehearsal purposes only. The play should be presented in its entirety without any pauses or breaks.

Scene One: Cinderella Scene Two: Rapunzel Scene Three: The Three Little Pigs Scene Four: Hansel and Gretel Scene Five: Jack and the Beanstalk Scene Six: The Princess and the Pea Scene Seven: Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs Scene Eight: Little Red Riding Hood Scene Nine: Goldilocks and the Three Bears

Three Bears "

For preview only

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WHAT HAPPENED AFTER ONCE UPON A TIME

Scene One

1 **STORYTELLER**: (ENTERS and addresses AUDIENCE.) Oh. hello! Does anyone know where I should ...? (Looks around and spots the chair UP RIGHT.) Oh, this must be the spot! (Sits.) I'm so sorry. You'll have to excuse my confusion. They just called me in a few hours ago as a substitute storyteller. I'm not really sure what 5 happened—something about the last one quitting out of the blue. Very mysterious if you ask me. (Looks around.) Now, let me see, they told me I'd find my stories around here somewhere. (Spots the stack of books.) Oh. ves! Here they are! Oh. my favorite! Fairy tales! (Wistfully.) You know, when I was little, whenever I heard the phrase 10 "Once upon a time..." it would just send shivers right through me! I just couldn't wait to hear what happened next! And now here I am saying it to you! And you must be just as excited as I am to find out how things will work out. Oh, I just love this job already! Let's start with "Cinderella," shall we? (Takes the "Cinderella" book, 15 clears throat, and then begins reading dramatically.) "Once upon a time..." (Looks up at AUDIENCE, shivers with delight, and continues.) "...there was a beautiful girl named Cinderella. Cinderella had two stepsisters who were very unkind to her. They made her do all the work. Cinderella had to sweep the floors, wash the dishes, and do 20 the laundry while her stepsisters relaxed on the sofa or went to grand parties—" **CINDERELLA**: (ENTERS with a bucket with a "C" monogram. A clean

freak, she wears a skirt with a blouse neatly tucked in. Her hair is up, possibly in a kerchief, and she wears tennis shoes since she's 25 always on the move.) Hold on! I don't see why everyone thinks I was forced to do housework. I love to clean! It's absolutely invigorating! Just the thought of getting things in order and organized just melts my stress away. (Pulls on rubber gloves.)

30 **STORYTELLER:** Excuse me? Are you Cinderella? CINDERELLA: Of course. Can't you tell it's me from my monogrammed mop bucket? (Lifts bucket up.)

STORYTELLER: Oh, yes. I'm sorry. I guess I should have spotted that. CINDERELLA: (Sympathetic.) First day on the job?

- 35 **STORYTELLER**: Yes, and I have to admit, I'm a little confused. Did you say you like to clean?
 - CINDERELLA: That's right! And I'm starting with this floor. It's filthy! Feel free to continue on with the story, though. (Kneels, takes a rag from the bucket and drapes it over her shoulder. Takes a scrub brush from the bucket and begins to scrub the floor.)
- 40

- 1 **STORYTELLER**: Well, all right. (Reads. [NOTE: Throughout the play, STORYTELLER'S lines in guotation marks indicate when she is reading from a book.]) "Now, one day a special invitation from the royal palace came in the mail. Cinderella and her two stepsisters
- were invited to a ball to celebrate the birthday of the prince. He 5 was the most handsome fellow in all the land."
 - **CINDERELLA:** Huh! (Still scrubbing vigorously.) He isn't much to look at, if you ask me. His hair's untidy, he always has dirt under his fingernails, and I know for a fact that he never makes his bed. The
- royal maids told me so! 10
 - **STORYTELLER:** But he's a prince. He shouldn't have to make his own bed.
 - **CINDERELLA:** Well, maybe if he wasn't so busy acting like he was Prince Charming or something he would have the time to fold his
- underwear properly and put them away. I hear he just leaves them 15 draped all over the place!

STORYTELLER: Really?

CINDERELLA: Oh, yes, and do you want to know what else?

STORYTELLER: What's that?

- 20 **CINDERELLA**: I don't care to step one big toe into that royal palace! The floors are polished just once a year, the mantle pieces are only dusted once a month, the kitchen ovens are a blackened mess, and— (STORYTELLER puts the "Cinderella" book aside and looks through the other books, scattering them around the chair.) Hey!
- 25 What are you doing?
 - **STORYTELLER:** Well, I'm trying to look for a new book, because I don't think this fairy tale is very accurate.
 - **CINDERELLA:** Well, I agree with you there, but wait! You're making a mess! (Drops the scrub brush into the bucket, runs over, and begins

to pile the books back up.) These books need to stay in order! You 30 should keep them arranged by size or alphabetically or-Ooh!maybe by the color of the spine! (Looks excitedly at STORYTELLER.)

STORYTELLER: I think we're getting a little off track here.

CINDERELLA: You're right. We need to focus. You keep reading, and I'll just tidy up. 35

STORYTELLER: All right, I'll give this another try.

- **CINDERELLA**: Absolutely. Go on, go on. (Pulls the rag off her shoulder, snaps it, and begins to energetically dust the covers of the books and restack them in order.)
- 40 **STORYTELLER**: (Picks up the Cinderella book and flips to a page.) "So, Cinderella's two stepsisters went off to the ball, and Cinderella was left to scrub the bathroom ... " (CINDERELLA smiles big. Adds



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- *in.)* ...which was one of her very favorite things to do. (*CINDERELLA* nods approvingly. Back to book.) "No sooner had she begun to polish the potty, than her fairy godmother appeared. She gave Cinderella a beautiful gown—"
- 5 CINDERELLA: That desperately needed to be dry cleaned.
 STORYTELLER: "And a carriage—"

CINDERELLA: That had the grimiest wheels you ever saw.

STORYTELLER: "And told her she mustn't stay past midnight at the ball."

10 **CINDERELLA**: Which I never wanted to go to in the first place!

STORYTELLER: Oh, boy. Okay, this isn't working out. Maybe I really should move on to another fairy tale.

CINDERELLA: Oh, no you don't. Not until I've had a chance to tackle this wall! (Stands and puts her hands on her hips.) Just look at it!

15 It's been vandalized!

STORYTELLER: Actually, some people consider graffiti to be its own unique form of art.

CINDERELLA: Well, those people must be absolute slobs, because I would never consider this anything but a complete mess!

20 **STORYTELLER**: Well, I don't want to spend time arguing. How about I start another story, and you feel free to go and—

CINDERELLA: (Excited.) Organize my spice rack?

STORYTELLER: (*Encouraging.*) Yes, yes, that sounds like a good idea.

CINDERELLA: So I can leave you here and count on things getting cleaned up when you're done?

STORYTELLER: Absolutely.

CINDERELLA: All right, then. Good luck with this new storyteller job and all. Shall I leave my Mr. Clean Magic Eraser with you?

STORYTELLER: Thank you, but I don't think I'll need it.

30 **CINDERELLA**: Okay, I'm off then. (*Grabs the bucket.*) Ooh! Maybe I'll have time to clean my tub with a toothbrush! (*EXITS.*)

End of Scene One

Scene Two

STORYTELLER: Well, now, I never expected Cinderella to be a clean freak. I suppose I shouldn't make too many assumptions about the stars of these fairy tales. (*Picks the next book, "Rapunzel," off the pile.*) So, let's try the next story, shall we? (*Dramatically.*) "Once

upon a time—" Oh, I do still like the sound of that! "...there was an evil enchantress who had a daughter named Rapunzel."

- 1 **RAPUNZEL**: (ENTERS, mimes chewing gum with an obnoxious diva attitude. She is way over-dressed in a prom dress, complete with matching shoes and jewelry.) Hold on right there. Miss Storyteller, because I know the perfect person to play the evil enchantress.
- My ex-friend Rachel. That's right, my ex-friend. Can you believe it?! 5 She calls me up the other day and tells me she asked out Prince Frederick, who she knows I've had a crush on since our first day at the Royal Academy!

STORYTELLER: Rapunzel?

10 RAPUNZEL: Duh.

STORYTELLER: Well, I'm sorry about your ex-friend, but so far, would you have any corrections to make to this fairy tale? (Indicates book.) Anything amiss?

RAPUNZEL: (Scoffs.) No.

15 **STORYTELLER**: Oh, good. May I continue then?

RAPUNZEL: (Rolls her eyes.) I guess.

- STORYTELLER: "Unable to have children, the evil enchantress had taken Rapunzel from a poor old couple when she was just a baby."
- **RAPUNZEL:** Well, that sounds about right. I could totally see Rachel doing something like that. 20

STORYTELLER: "And Rapunzel grew into a beautiful young woman."

RAPUNZEL: (Examines her manicured nails.) So far, you're reading it perfectly.

STORYTELLER: "Since Rapunzel was so attractive, the evil enchantress

- locked her away in a tower with no stairs or door so there wasn't 25 any chance a prince could steal her away."
 - **RAPUNZEL:** Oh, I hate this part. I'm stuck up there in that stinky old tower, and no one's returning my calls, and it's just so boring! By the way, when is lunch? I was told this was going to be catered,
- and I'm famished! 30

STORYTELLER: Well, I hadn't heard anything about a lunch break.

RAPUNZEL: Aren't you in charge around here?

STORYTELLER: Not really. I was just called in as a substitute storyteller. **RAPUNZEL:** So, you have no real authority then?

³⁵ **STORYTELLER**: Well, I wouldn't say that. I'm doing the narrating. **RAPUNZEL**: (Snaps her fingers.) Let me talk to your boss.

STORYTELLER: I'm not sure who that would be.

RAPUNZEL: I want to speak with the one who makes the important decisions around here... the one who does the hiring and firing!

(Glares threateningly.) 40

1 STORYTELLER: (Worried.) Oh, Rapunzel. Please, you don't have to do that. If I've offended you somehow, I'm sorry! It's my first day on the job, and—

RAPUNZEL: Fine, fine. Continue with my story.

5 **STORYTELLER**: (*Relieved.*) Yes, of course. (*Flips hastily to the next page.*) "But at the top of the tower there was a tiny window where the extremely beautiful and multi-talented princess could look over the countryside."

RAPUNZEL: (*Sighs, smiling.*) That is one thing the real estate agent was right about. It did have a lovely view.

STORYTELLER: "When the evil enchantress wanted to check on Rapunzel at the top of the tower, she would cry, 'Rapunzel, Rapunzel, let down your hair!'"

RAPUNZEL: And can you believe that? They actually slipped that clause into my contract—that I had to let someone climb my hair! I can't imagine why I couldn't have had a hair double or something! (*Throws her hands up.*) The things I do for this business!

STORYTELLER: That's terrible.

RAPUNZEL: Well, go on, go on.

20 **STORYTELLER**: "So Rapunzel let her long hair down for the evil enchantress to climb up and—"

RAPUNZEL: You know, let me just summarize this next part for you.

STORYTELLER: (Startled.) Oh, all right.

- **RAPUNZEL:** Well, first of all, I'll have you know it was just a couple of days, and then I was so sick of having to repeat that scene where my hair is getting ripped out of my scalp that I walked off set. I mean, really! If they expect me to just stand around for that sort of torture, they better be prepared to offer me a much bigger share of the royalties.
- 30 **STORYTELLER**: Of course.
 - **RAPUNZEL**: Then, they hire this little pipsqueak to play the prince who is supposed to be riding through the forest and then stopping at the tower when he hears me singing. Well, the wimp can't even stay on his horse! He keeps falling off, and we have to keep restarting
- 35 the scene! You can't imagine what that did to my singing voice. STORYTELLER: That's awful.
 - **RAPUNZEL**: And then, he finally gets to the top of the tower, tearing my hair out in the process, mind you, and he starts to speak, causing me to about keel over!
- 40 STORYTELLER: What was the matter? RAPUNZEL: Let's just say the guy really needed some Tic Tacs.

1 STORYTELLER: No.

RAPUNZEL: Yes! And they expected me to kiss him.

STORYTELLER: No!

RAPUNZEL: Yes! And when I refused to pucker up, this pathetic

excuse for a prince just sat at the bottom of my tower for the next 5 three days, waiting for me to change my mind. My word, it felt like he was stalking me!

STORYTELLER: Well, that's guite a story.

RAPUNZEL: And that's the end.

10 **STORYTELLER:** That's the end? RAPUNZEL: Duh. **STORYTELLER:** (Confused.) We're done?

- **RAPUNZEL**: Yes, I'd say our business is finished here. I need some time to call Rachel back and give her a piece of my mind. But I tell
- you what, I'll have my people call your people, and we'll do lunch. 15 Ta-ta! (EXITS.)

End of Scene Two

Scene Three

- STORYTELLER: Well! I had no idea that working with fairytale superstars would be so challenging. Maybe it would help if I tried a story with a larger cast and no divas. (Picks the next book off
- the pile.) Ah, here's one! "The Three Little Pigs!" (Opens up the 20 book and reads.) "Once upon a time... (Looks up at AUDIENCE and smiles.) ... there was an old mother pig who had three little pigs. Since she couldn't afford to keep them all at home, she sent them out to seek their fortunes. The first little pig set off and met a man
- with a bundle of straw." 25
 - FIRST PIG: (ENTERS, rubs eyes, and talks nasally.) Oh, boy. I keep telling them I'm allergic to straw.

STORYTELLER: Really? You have hayfever?

FIRST PIG: Definitely. If I get within a mile of a stalk of straw, my eyes get itchy, I start to sneeze, and I can't breathe!

STORYTELLER: That bad, huh?

- Yup. But that's the breaks. You can keep reading. FIRST PIG: (Rummages in pockets.) I'm pretty sure I brought my antihistamines with me today.
- 35 STORYTELLER: Okay. I'll try to read this part really quickly. (Reads fast.) "So the first little pig asked for some straw to build a house. So the man gave the first little pig some straw-"
 - FIRST PIG: (Pulls a bundle of straw out of a pocket.) Ah-choo! (Pulls out a handkerchief.)



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STORYTELLER: (Reads faster as the FIRST PIG continues to sneeze.) "And the first little pig built a house. Presently, a wolf came along, knocked on the door, and said..."

WOLF: (ENTERS, growls.) Little pig, little pig, let me come in!

- 5 **STORYTELLER:** "To which the pig replied..."
 - **FIRST PIG**: Not by the hair of my chinny-chin-chin. (*Thinks.*) Hey, what is a chinny-chin-chin anyway? Could it be the symptom of a serious disease? Because with my weakened immune system, I can't afford to catch anything.
- 10 WOLF: (Straightens up posture and speaks in a gentleman's voice. English accent if possible, but not necessary.) Why, my dear fellow, I've never even considered what a chinny-chin-chin might be. I do know all this huffing and puffing is taking a dreadful toll on my asthma. (Pulls out an inhaler.)
- ¹⁵ **FIRST PIG**: Really? I didn't know you had asthma. And you still wanted to be cast as the big bad wolf?
 - **WOLF**: (*Dramatic.*) It's the role I was born to play, and I'm willing to suffer for my art.

STORYTELLER: May I continue?

20 FIRST PIG: Yeah, I guess.

WOLF: Oh, yes, certainly.

- **STORYTELLER:** "So, the wolf huffed, and he puffed..." (WOLF feebly huffs and puffs, then takes a puff on his inhaler while FIRST PIG blows his nose.) "And he blew the house down."
- ²⁵ **WOLF**: (Throws an arm over FIRST PIG'S shoulder, leading him OFF.) Sorry, old chum.
 - **FIRST PIG**: Ah, don't worry about it. At least I'll be put out of my misery. (*Sneezes. They're OFF.*)

STORYTELLER: I guess we'd better move on to the second little pig.

- 30 **WOLF**: (Peeks IN. Dramatic.) The show must go on. (He's OFF again.)
 - **STORYTELLER**: "The second little pig was busy building a house of sticks."
- **SECOND PIG**: *(ENTERS with a bundle of sticks.)* Please tell me why I'm always stuck working with the heaviest props? My back is killing me!
 - **STORYTELLER:** "And when he needed more sticks, he asked the stick merchant..."
 - **SECOND PIG**: Please give me the lightest sticks out of the pile so I can build a house.

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40 **STORYTELLER**: I don't think that's what it says here.

- 1 **SECOND PIG**: I'm ad-libbing. I'm not spending another 300 dollars at the chiropractor this month.
 - **STORYTELLER**: Okay, I suppose that detail won't matter so much to the story. "Then, along came the wolf, who said..."
- 5 WOLF: (ENTERS, growls.) Little pig, little pig, let me come in!
 STORYTELLER: "To which the pig replied..."

SECOND PIG: Not by the hair of my chinny-chin-chin. Not unless you're willing to come in and help me lift these heavy sticks into place.

STORYTELLER: Hey, that's not what's written here! That would definitely change the story if you invited the wolf in.

SECOND PIG: Okay, okay. Let him huff and puff and blow the house down so I can go lie down on a heating pad.

STORYTELLER: Well, you could just go, and we'll skip over that part. The wolf's asthma is taking the huff out of his puffing anyway.

15 **SECOND PIG**: Thanks. I feel another spasm coming on. (*EXITS, clutching lower back.*)

WOLF: (*Gentleman's voice.*) Cheerio, good fellow! Just as well. My cholesterol count's up, and my doctor tells me I need to cut down on bacon. (*Picks up bundle of sticks and escorts SECOND PIG OFF.*)

- 20 **STORYTELLER**: I see. I still have to read about the third little pig though.
 - **WOLF**: (Pops ON again, waving paw nonchalantly.) Yes, yes, fine. (He's OFF.)

STORYTELLER: "So the third little pig went off to seek his fortune and

- ²⁵ met a man with a pile of bricks. He asked the man if he could use them to build a house."
 - **THIRD PIG**: (*Trudges ON, moans.*) I can't possibly build anything right now. I'm so depressed.

STORYTELLER: Oh, my.

30 THIRD PIG: I can't sleep. I can't eat. I'm certainly not going to tackle some large-scale creative project. Besides, my therapy session starts in about fifteen minutes.

STORYTELLER: (Calls offstage to WOLF.) What do we do now?

WOLF: (*ENTERS with a dramatic flourish.*) Oh, it's quite simple, good storyteller. The pig and I, we'll just take our bows.

STORYTELLER: All right, then. I suppose that's all we can do at this point. (WOLF and THIRD PIG both bow deeply to AUDIENCE. THIRD PIG stands with shoulders slumped.)

WOLF: (*Takes out a handkerchief dabs at his eyes dramatically.*) Thank you, thank you so much. You've been a wonderful audience. (*To*

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End of script sample.

PRODUCTION NOTES

PROPERTIES ONSTAGE

Chair, books: "Cinderella," "Rapunzel," "The Three Little Pigs," "Hansel and Gretel," "Jack and the Beanstalk," "The Princess and the Pea," "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs," "Little Red Riding Hood," and "Goldilocks and the Three Bears."

PROPERTIES BROUGHT ON

Scene One:

Rubber gloves, rag, scrub brush, bucket with a monogrammed "C" (CINDERELLA)

Scene Three:

Bundle of straw, handkerchief (FIRST PIG)

Inhaler (WOLF)

Bundle of sticks (SECOND PIG)

Scene Four:

Spear (HANSEL) Small purse (GRETEL)

Scene Seven:

Planner, cell phone, business card (LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD)

Scene Eight:

Broom (SNOW WHITE)

Scene Nine:

Packets of papers (PIGS)

SOUND FFFFCTS

Door knocking, cell phone ring.

COSTUME SUGGESTIONS

The costume suggestions in the script offer a playful, contemporary twist on the fairy tales. Of course, if this is not the director's vision, more traditional costuming can be incorporated instead.

The animal costumes can be very simple and representative. PIGS should have pig noses and tails and wear plain clothing in pink or gray. WOLF wears gray clothing and perhaps something that would make him look like an English actor, such as an ascot or a fedora. Furry hands and drawn on whiskers with a black nose would also be helpful. BABY BEAR has brown bear ears and wears brown clothing.



STORYTELLER ROLE

A great deal of the success of this play depends on the performance of the storyteller. She will need to act determined, but not too irritated. It might be tempting for her to sound upset or disillusioned by the second or third scene with all the interruptions, but it's important that she resist this, or she will burn out as a character. The storyteller is like the exceptionally kind substitute teacher who has good intentions but whose patience is definitely being tested.

Though the storyteller's role is quite large, the book props can have her lines in them as prompts. This does not mean, however, that the actor playing the storyteller does not need to learn or rehearse her lines. Intonation, expression, and eye contact would all be severely hampered if the lines were simply read. Any lines hidden in the books should only be used as prompts.

FLEXIBLE CASTING

PIGS, DWARFS, and BABY BEAR can be played as either male or female.

For a smaller cast, DWARFS can double with other roles. When SNOW WHITE enters at the end of Scene Nine, the DWARFS do not have to accompany her if doubling is used.

Scenes can be cut to accommodate a smaller cast or for a shorter running time.

We hope you've enjoyed this script sample.

We encourage you to read the entire script before making your final decision.

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