Tea with Cinders

It’s lovely in the High Street when the sun is out.

Today, there’s a nice gentle breeze and the air is warm on the skin.

It’s very quiet; there are only a few folk about.

Two ladies are sitting at a table on the pavement outside a tea shop.

In front of them they have a tea pot, a couple of cups and two plates.

It’s very pleasant in the shade of the trees which grow in the pavement.

They are enjoying a nice cosy chat.

Let’s listen in to their conversation:

*It’s really lovely in the palace gardens.*

I’m sure it is, ma’am.

*Especially at this time of year.*

Yes, ma’am.

*You must come and see them.*

Thank you, Ma’am.

*We could have tea.*

Thank you, Ma’am, that would be lovely!

*A nice tea down by the lake.*

I’ll look forward to that ma’am.

*There are some lovely trees down by the lake.*

That sounds lovely, ma’am.

*We’ll sit under them if it’s sunny.*

Thank you, ma’am.

*Shall we say next week?*

Lovely, ma’am. Thank you ma’am.

*Are you free on Thursday?*

Yes, ma’am.

*Good. Shall we say three o’clock?*

Thank you ma’am.

*We can have a really cosy chat, just the two of us.*

Yes, ma’am. Thank you, ma’am.

*Look, I know you are supposed to call me ma’am.*

Oh yes, Ma’am.

*But please call me Cinders.*

Pardon?

*I hate being called “ma’am” all the time!*

Sorry, ma’am. Thank you, ma’am.

*There you go again! Call me Cinders!*

Sorry, Cinders. Thank you Cinders.

*That’s much better!*

It seems wrong to call you Cinders.

*Do you think so?*

You’re a princess, now!

*Cinders is what I was always called before.*

I’ve heard about how you became a princess.

*Have you?*

I’ve heard you were a house maid once.

*I was a house maid for years!*

For your older sisters.

*They made me do all the work.*

All the cleaning?

*Yes.*

All the cooking?

*Yes.*

Everything?

*Yes.*

Poor you!

*I had to live in the cellar.*

That can’t have been very nice.

*It was cold and dark and damp.*

Nasty!

*There were rats down there as well.*

Did you sleep down there?

*Yes.*

Nasty!

*Very.*

Tell me how you came to be a princess.

*It’s a long story!*

Back then you must have been scruffy.

*Yes. And dirty.*

Then you met your prince!

*Yes.*

How did you come to meet him?

*Luck, really.*

Surely you never went anywhere a prince would go?

*Of course not.*

So how did you meet him?

*Well, you’ll find my story strange.*

I won’t.

*Promise you won’t laugh?*

Of course not!

*Well, I knew there was someone special looking out for me.*

Someone special looking out for you?

*Someone magical who was on my side.*

Really?

*Yes.*

Even while you lived in a cellar, working morning, noon and night?

*Yes, even then.*

So what happened?

*Well, every year there was a ball at the palace.*

I’ve never been, but I know there is one.

*My sisters were invited.*

Were you invited too?

*We all were, I think.*

So you went to the ball, and the prince fell in love with you!

Well…

How romantic!

*It wasn’t quite like that!*

Oh? What happened?

*Well, I think my sisters tore my invitation up. I never saw it, anyway.*

That must have been really painful.

*Yes, it was. I was very unhappy.*

I’m not surprised.

*I cried and cried and cried, down there in the cellar.*

So how did you get to the ball in the end?

*You’ll find it hard to believe!*

How did a dirty girl in rags become a beautiful woman?

*Well…*

In a beautiful gown, at a ball, in a palace?

*It was my special person.*

Your special person?

*I call her my Fairy Godmother.*

Fairy Godmother?

*She helped me go to the ball.*

How did she do that?

*Magic!*

She didn’t have much time.

*No!*

Your sisters had already gone.

*Yes, but suddenly my Fairy Godmother was in the cellar with me.*

Magic!

*She told me to stop crying and get upstairs to have a good bath.*

Well, yes. You must have needed one!

*She said “You’re going to a ball in a palace, and you can’t go looking like that!”*

So you shot upstairs and into the bath!

*You bet I did.*

And when you got out?

*Well, that’s the most amazing thing.*

What?

*Suddenly, there was a lovely ball gown.*

Wow!

*Suddenly there was a pair of glass slippers.*

Amazing!

*I had diamonds in my hair!*

Lovely!

*There was a posh car waiting for me.*

Wow!

*With a handsome man at the wheel.*

I bet you looked much more beautiful than your sisters.

*Well, yes, but that’s not difficult, is it!*

I suppose not.

*You suppose right!*

Anyway, there you are, ready to go to a ball.

*Feeling very nervous.*

I bet you were. What happened next?

*My Fairy Godmother told me I could go to the ball, on one condition.*

Oh? What was that?

*I had to leave by midnight.*

Midnight!

*She was very, very strict about that.*

What would have happened if you had stayed after midnight?

*Well, at the stroke of midnight* *I would change back into Cinders.*

At the stroke of midnight!

*If I left before midnight everyone would remember me as Cinderella.*

But after midnight?

*If I stayed after midnight they would see me as dirty Cinders, in rags.*

What was it like at the ball?

*Wonderful.*

I bet it was.

*I danced all night.*

What did your sisters say when they saw you?

*They were very annoyed!*

I bet they were.

*And the prince wanted to dance with me all the time.*

That must have annoyed them!

*By midnight he was dancing only with me.*

Romantic!

*But I kept one eye on the clock.*

Did you get away before it struck twelve?

*Only just.*

Oh?

*We were still dancing at about five to twelve.*

A close shave!

*Then he had speak to some important people.*

And you just left?

*I ran down the stairs to the car.*

Not easy, in a ball gown and glass slippers.

*No. I lost one of them on the stairs.*

One of the glass slippers?

*Yes.*

Which the prince found on the stairs?

*That’s how he discovered who I really was.*

I’ve heard about that.

*He had every woman within miles try the slipper on.*

He did!

*The day after the ball.*

He promised to marry the woman it fitted.

*He went from house to house with that slipper.*

In the end, he got to yours.

*That’s right.*

Your sisters all tried the slipper on, of course.

*I think he was afraid it might fit one of them.*

I bet he was!

*Their feet were much too big, though.*

So he placed the slipper on your foot, it fitted, and he married you!

*Well, not quite.*

No?

*My sisters didn’t want to tell him where I was.*

Oh?

*They didn’t want to tell him that the slipper was mine.*

How did the prince find you, then?

*Luckily, the paper boy came by just then.*

Oh?

*He told the prince that there was one more sister.*

Good for him.

*He told the prince I was probably in the cellar.*

So the prince came into your cellar.

*Yes, he did.*

Then he placed the slipper on your foot and it fitted perfectly.

*Sort of.*

Sort of?

*Well, he did have the slipper with him, and of course it fitted my foot.*

But I suppose he could also recognise you.

*Yes, of course he recognised me!*

Even as dirty Cinders!

*I wasn’t that dirty.*

Oh!

*I’d had a bath the night before!*

Well, of course.

*We still have the slipper. Keep it on show.*

Nice!

*It reminds us how we met.*

And now you live in a palace!

*Yes.*

What about your sisters?

*Mmmm?*

What happened to them?

*Nothing much.*

They say that the prince had their heads chopped off.

*Well no.*

No?

*That’s just a story.*

But what happened to them, in the end?

*They still live in the old house.*

Do they?

*But they do their own housework these days.*

Goodness!

*Mmmm?*

Is that the time?

*Pardon?*

I’m sorry, but I must dash.

*Where are you off to?*

I have to be in town.

*Oh.*

I’m a bit late, too.

*Oh dear.*

I’ve just seen my bus coming.

*Oh, yes.*

If I run, I’ll catch it.

*Quickly then!*

See you Thursday at three!

*Yes.*

Bye!

*At the palace!*

OK.

*Bye!*