

CINDERELLA. I don't know who he was, but somehow I feel he has changed my life. It's kind of a Cinderella story, really, if you think about it.

STEPMOTHER. Yeah, except you're still wearing rags and you still have to clean the house.

1ST STEPSISTER. And we're changing your name to Cinderumpelstiltskin.

CINDERELLA. Why?

2ND STEPSISTER. Because we're mean. Come on, let's go find Chester and pluck his nose hairs.

(They exit, leaving CINDERELLA with her broom. A TORTOISE enters.)

CINDERELLA. Who are you supposed to be?

TORTOISE / JACK. I'm the tortoise.

CINDERELLA. No, you aren't, you're Jack, the loser narrator.

TORTOISE / JACK. *(With desperate gesticulations:)* Ixnay on the Ack-Jay!

CINDERELLA. I don't speak Turkish. Anyway, I thought you'd be bone bread by now.

TORTOISE / JACK. *(Dropping character:)* I found this costume backstage and used it to fool the giant. I'm going to lose myself in this next story and he'll never find me.

CINDERELLA. You better hope he doesn't like turtle soup.

TORTOISE / JACK. *(Very slowly:)* Once upon a time there was a tortoise who was very slow but very dependable.

CINDERELLA. I have toilets to clean.

(She exits.)

TORTOISE / JACK. I always get where I set out to go. It just takes me longer than most people.

(RABBIT tears on and screeches to a halt.)

RABBIT. *(Fast:)* Tortoise, you are so slow, I could probably grow hair faster than you run.

TORTOISE / JACK. Oh yeah?

RABBIT. That's why the story is called "The Tortoise and the Hair."

TORTOISE / JACK. *(Very slowly:)* Then I—

RABBIT. You challenge me to a race. No kidding, what a concept. C'mon, let's do it. The Fast and the Infuriating.

(An OWL enters as SPECTATORS gather.)

OWL. I don't know what I'm doing in this story, but they've asked me to say that on the day of the big race— You know, may I simply point out that I have a PhD from Yale University, and I did postdoctoral research in particle physics at the Institute for Advanced Studies at Princeton, and I just have to say that—

TORTOISE / JACK. Owl!

OWL. I just have to say that on the day of the big race, Tortoise and Rabbit lined up at the starting line, and the grossly overqualified referee said, "On your mark. Get set. Grow!"

TORTOISE / JACK. Tortoise starts to run.

RABBIT. Rabbit starts to grow his hair.

TORTOISE / JACK. Tortoise runs.

RABBIT. Rabbit grows his hair.

(SPECTATORS begin to drift off.)

TORTOISE / JACK. Tortoise runs.

RABBIT. Rabbit grows his hair.

TORTOISE / JACK. Tortoise runs.

RABBIT. Rabbit grows his hair.

TORTOISE / JACK. Tortoise runs.

RABBIT. Rabbit grows his hair.

TORTOISE / JACK. Tortoise—

(Suddenly the GIANT [or just his giant hand] appears and grabs JACK, dragging him off. RABBIT and SPECTATORS exit quickly in the opposite direction. OWL remains onstage.)

OWL. That is what is called a *deus ex machina*. It is a dramatic device that normally comes at the end of a play and saves the hero from certain death. In this case, I think you'll agree, it has saved all of us from certain boredom.

(FOXY LOXY enters. OWL exits when dismissed. When FOXY LOXY introduces the LITTLE OLD MAN and LITTLE OLD LADY, they will enter.)

FOXY LOXY. I'll handle this, Poindexter. *(To audience:)* With all this excitement, and in the absence of our narrator, no one realized