

COOK

All my life.

LADY TREMAYNE

No one loved you enough to keep you, and you arrived here an orphan. Pinned to your bassinet was a recipe for sourdough bread, and you've been cooking since you could reach the counter.

COOK

I am an orphan. I bake nice biscuits.

LADY TREMAYNE

Well, nice is a bit of a reach, but you bake. Now go out into the garden and pick something. Herbs. Or rhubarb.

Lady Tremayne rings the bell.

COOK

Must locate the rhubarb.

LADY TREMAYNE

I hope it grows on a cliff side.

Cook exits. Lucifur meows

LADY TREMAYNE

Oh hello, Lucifur! I was just taking part in my favorite pastime!

LUCIFUR

Gaslighting.

LADY TREMAYNE

But of course! You just get me.

LUCIFUR

I will at some point.

LADY TREMAYNE

Threats from my favorite kitten? Mix us a drink, Lucy.

LUCIFUR

The usual?

LADY TREMAYNE

Surprise me! But not with poison.

LUCIFUR

(mixing a very large drink)

Go on.

LADY TREMAYNE

Anyway, on to current problems. We're running out of the money I inherited from when my last husband: number five.

LUCIFUR

Seven.

LADY TREMAYNE

Seven? I should be richer. Fine. When husband number seven "went to the other side".

LUCIFUR

Kicked the bucket.

LADY TREMAYNE

Popped his clogs.

LUCIFUR

Gave up the ghost.

LADY TREMAYNE

Tripped down several flights of stairs.

LUCIFUR

I was the impediment upon which he tripped.

LADY TREMAYNE

Now we're both in trouble. Bad kitty! That drink had better be delicious. And calorie free if I'm to find number eight.

Lucifur pours Lady Tremayne's very large drink then pours his into a bowl. Adds a straw to both. Delivers her drink, then sits sipping his.

LUCIFUR

You might not need to track your k-cals.

LADY TREMAYNE

Whatever are you talking about? You've seen my accounts! I'm a week away from you having to kill mice for food.

LUCIFUR

Mice won't be my goal.

(Points out a few people he'll snack on in the audience)

I might have found a solution. Look at that scroll over there.

LADY TREMAYNE

How might it get into my hands?

LUCIFUR

You could saunter towards it. Or gambol. Or sashay.

LADY TREMAYNE

You are a catty one.

LUCIFUR

I am a feline.

LADY TREMAYNE

Exactly how many lives do you have left?

LUCIFUR

How many do I need?

LADY TREMAYNE

Good question.

(picks up scroll, begins reading)

"Be it here known" boring part, boring part. Grand ball, King and Queen of the Hoh request all marriageable females attend. Oh tater tots, there's an age limit, and I'm just over.

LUCIFUR

Just is a very elastic word.

LADY TREMAYNE

There goes another life. How does this benefit me?

LUCIFUR

You do have daughters.

LADY TREMAYNE

Oh, yes. Two.

LUCIFUR

Technically 3.

LADY TREMAYNE

Hmm. What were their names again?

LUCIFUR

Druzella, Anastasia and Cinderella

LADY TREMAYNE

Oh yes, my two daughters and that flat spare tire my husband left me. I am training them in the homely arts to be fascinating and scintillating. I'm training the basement dweller to be... homely.

LUCIFUR

What's scintillating? Does it require a prescription? And can you even teach fascinating behavior?

LADY TREMAYNE (looks at the scroll)

Well. This might be the very thing I needed. Little princess goody-goody has reached the end of her usefulness, at exactly the same time as my 'cook problem'. What if I can get rich again but not have to marry another silly man? I could marry off my lazy daughterhters, and send the athletic loner off into the forest. That takes care of my Two Daughter Problem-

LUCIFUR

Again. Three.

LADY TREMAYNE

Ugh! What a downer reality is. The Cinderella problem is tricky, given that I've kept her uneducated, unaware and underfed. Compared to my highly educated, purebred daughters, she's a basement goblin with straw like hair and horrible cuticles.

LUCIFUR

You are very specific in your insults.

LADY TREMAYNE

I come from the golden age of evil stepmothers. Do you see a wire hanger in this castle?

LUCIFUR

They haven't been invented yet.

LADY TREMAYNE

Still. Refinement and taste are my watchwords. And the sticky little wicket named Cinderella needs to go. She has been useful. After all, it

was her inheritance that educated my retirement, uhh girls' education, after I murd- after her father departed so suddenly. But now the bank of Cinderella is empty, so it's time for her to join her father in a nice dirt nap. Oh, what? You feel sorry for Cinderella? You'd hate her too! She was always asking questions. 'Who's that mean lady, daddy?' 'Where's Mommy? Where did she go?' The impertinence. Children should be silent and unseen. Are you booing me? Let's do it together! Boooo! I'm the best at being the worst! BOOOOOO! Look. Children are accessories. Adult children are investments. They get married and I get rich. And if they don't marry, well... I have to have a plan, or I end up like you. Rumpled. Small. Employed. No, not for me. I am from the golden age of evil stepmothers, which means I seethe in style and plot murder while wearing shoulder pads. I will always survive, and I will do it in style. Now Lucifur. Be a good kitty and go have a little look at the recruits and report back. The list of tutors I forget to pay is very long, so the girls must always do things and know things in order to further my ambitions.

LUCIFUR

And what, might I ask, is in it for me?

LADY TREMAYNE

A roof. Premium kibble. Unlimited cocktails. Ear scratches. Schmoopies. The remainder of your lives.

LUCIFUR

Fine. I'll spy. But only because I love it.

LADY TREMAYNE

Good kitty.

LUCIFUR

(Archly)

Meow.

(BOTH EXIT)

#### ACT I, SCENE 5

Kitchen. Lucifur enters, looks around and finds a spot in the corner to watch. He should take a little time making it comfy, and then turn around several times before he settles. Cinderella is doing something that doesn't require a lot of props.

ANASTASIA

Cin?