

Lights up:

WRITER is sitting with pen and paper, pensively staring at the blank page.

WRITER: What to write? Oh God, I don't know. *She pauses to think for a moment.* Haven't tried a fairy tale. I know! Sleeping Beauty/Cinderella, something like that.

She starts to write.

Once upon a time, long, long ago, a handsome prince...

THE PRINCE: *Emerging onto the stage* Once upon a time, long, long ago? That's a bit old-fashioned, don't you think? Why not today? If you must insist on writing my story, (and I'm not sure you should) at least make it current. Once upon a time means I'm dead already. Thanks a bunch.

WRITER: In a land far away...

THE PRINCE: Why does it have to be far away? Don't you exile me to some weird place in heavens-know-where. I like it right here. There's decent coffee for a start.

WRITER: A handsome prince, in swashbuckling clothes, big hair, tall boots

THE PRINCE: Really? *He displays his outfit.* You want me to look like this? Give me a break. Just look at these clothes. Absolutely ridiculous. Why on earth would any man worth his salt want to be dressed like this? Impractical and uncomfortable.

WRITER: Well, maybe the shirt could be toned down a bit

THE PRINCE: A bit? I look like a cross between Elvis and Cher. I'd be the laughing stock of the town. You can get rid of all this shiny stuff for a start.

WRITER: The handsome prince, in a pleasantly casual shirt

The Prince removes his shirt to reveal a casual shirt underneath, dropping the offending top shirt onto the floor in distaste.

WRITER: Is that better?

THE PRINCE: Marginally. How about a decent haircut, and some jeans?

WRITER: You can't be serious. How will she know you're the handsome prince?

THE PRINCE: You're the writer. You sort it out.

The prince begins removing his trousers, big boots and wig, to reveal jeans, tidy haircut, and bare feet.

WRITER: The handsome prince rode his rearing steed...

THE PRINCE: Whoa. Stop right there. I am not riding a rearing steed for you. Me and horses don't get on. Tried it, never again. Nope, if it hasn't got a motor, I'm not touching it.

WRITER: Okay, okay. The handsome prince...

THE PRINCE: And just why do I have to be handsome? What's wrong with falling for my personality and good character?

WRITER: *sighs, exasperated*. You don't get it, do you? In all the good stories, the handsome prince wins the princess over with his good looks, just after he has saved her life.

THE PRINCE: Like CPR and stuff? Yeuch. How's that romantic? You expect me to give the kiss of life to some girl, then she's going to fall head over heels just because of my looks? That's a bit shallow isn't it? What sort of girl is she?

WRITER: *Dreamily*. She's a beautiful, rich princess, with long flowing golden hair, surrounded by lots of doting servants.

THE PRINCE: Why? Can't she do stuff for herself? Some bimbo with an ego; what would I do with a girl like that?

WRITER: Marry her.

THE PRINCE: Why?

WRITER: Because you saved her life.

THE PRINCE: So?

WRITER: *patiently, as to a child* You climb mountains, ford rivers, and fight dragons to get to her. Then you give her the kiss of life, she opens her eyes and instantly falls in love with you.

THE PRINCE: Let's get something sorted out right here. Firstly, I do not climb; not even the stairs if I can help it. Secondly, I don't go in rivers except to swim, and I certainly won't be fighting any dragons. They're an endangered species and need protection. Things like urbanization and global warming are giving them a hard time. Leave them in peace, I say.

WRITER: Okay, okay. So you will ride your e-bike over the bridge, bravely force your way into the menacing forest, then search for her in deep dark caves.

THE PRINCE: Nope. Don't do bats, nor menacing forests. If it wants to kill me, I aint going.

WRITER: Rides his e-bike...

THE PRINCE: ...to the coffee shop.

WRITER: Where you see her lying asleep in a glass case.

THE PRINCE: It's the middle of the day! What sort of girl is asleep in the daytime, and in public? Doesn't sound like my kind of girl. If she's asleep, there's no need for CPR either. You're not very good at this writing lark, are you?

WRITER: Watch it. I could just rub you out, you know. Start again with a more compliant prince.

THE PRINCE: No fun in that. Besides, you might get someone worse than me. The prince on the page is always better; a bird in hand and all that. Trust me, I know about this stuff.

WRITER: It might be worth the risk.

THE PRINCE: Don't delete me; my life has just begun.

WRITER: Then play nice.

THE PRINCE: Okay, okay, but no more stupid clothes and princesses, please. My sanity would be in danger.

WRITER: Well, you're staying a Prince, and that's that. The prince rides to the coffee shop, arriving just in time to see the pretty girl collapse in a heap on the footpath.

THE PRINCE: That I can cope with

WRITER: Moving quickly, he gives her the kiss of life

THE PRINCE: CPR; You're just lucky that I did the refresher course.

WRITER: She wakes up and sees the prince

THE PRINCE: Hold it! No she doesn't. She starts to come round so I put her in the recovery position. All she's going to see is a lot of feet and footpath. I'm phoning for an ambulance on my brand new, latest model cell-phone. *He proudly shows off the phone.*

WRITER: She'll get a glimpse of you, her knight in shining armor. Your eyes meet; with an electric volt of recognition she falls instantly in love.

THE PRINCE: Nope. She's too groggy. I'll just be a man in her dreams. The ambulance will come to get her, and I'll fade into the background, then get onto my e-bike and ride off into the sunset.

WRITER: It's too early for sunset.

THE PRINCE: Oh. Maybe I will go for that coffee, and meet some nice intelligent normal girl who's not going to scare me half to death by being rich, having servants, and expecting me to be a hero.

WRITER: Boring. No-one will want to read that story. *Curiously* What's she like, this girl?

THE PRINCE: She has nice eyes, laughs a lot, and likes good conversation. She works hard, follows her dreams, and doesn't expect me to fight anything. No servants because we can both cook and clean. She wants kids, loves reading and coffee, and is fun to be with.

WRITER: She sounds a bit ordinary. Girls like us don't get to win handsome princes, or have someone romantically save our lives. *Sighs*. Nothing exciting ever happens.

THE PRINCE: Good grief. Give me a break. Far rather have you as a girlfriend than that bimbo you were trying to marry me off to.

WRITER: Yeah, right.

THE PRINCE: Let me prove it. Come on. *He extends his hand to her*. Leave that and let's go for coffee. I know this cool place where you can watch dragons in their natural habitat. What do you say?

WRITER: But I have a story to write.

THE PRINCE: Far better to live it than write about it. Come on, live a little. Call it research.

WRITER: *Rising from her seat, putting aside her work*. Oh, what the heck. Why not?

The WRITER and PRINCE leave the stage together, arms tucked together.

END