

Once Before A Time
A Cinderella Prequel
By Martin A. Follose

CAST

6 females, 8 males (less with doubling), 4 either, many extras

ELLA	Before she was known as Cinderella. A tough girl with determination and savvy.
STEPMOTHER	Ella's wicked stepmother.
STEPSISTERS (2)	Ella's anything but nice stepsisters.
FATHER	Ella's father, always going on business trips.
TREE	A stand-up comedian. Really!
HENRY	Boy Ella meets during her journey. No one knows he's the prince and he would like to keep it that way.
BAY	Girl who lives in the forest.
JESSE	Girl who lives in the forest with Bay, boy crazy.
REESE	Big bad guy, a bit of a pirate, full of himself.
DREW	Bad guy, clueless.
AVERY	Bad guy, Reese's right hand man or so he thinks.
GUARDS (2)	King's guards in search of the Prince.
WOLF	An evil fairy tale character.
FOX	From the Gingerbread Man.
WITCH	Another evil fairy tale character.
HOOK	The one and only from Peter Pan.
NARRATORS	Any number.
EXTRAS	Black forest trees, cave entrance, cave wall, and many more!

NOTE: Narrator lines are assigned by the director. The lines could be divided between as many or as few actors as needed. Main characters can and should also be narrators. There should not be one actor reading all of the Narrator's lines. A blank line follows "NARRATOR" so that the name of that narrator can be written in.

SYNOPSIS

Before Ella slept in a corner by the fireplace, before her stepmother's hatred of her, and before her stepsisters nicked named her Cinderella, she was a happy child living with her widowed father. As the story goes, Ella asked her father to bring her the first twig that brushes his hat on his way home from a business trip. Ella planted the twig on her mother's grave, her tears fell upon the twig and it grew into a beautiful tree. This is where Ella's "before the story" begins.

The tree warns Ella of her father's impending danger. Ella's father was again on a business trip so Ella decides that she will journey north, find her father, and warn him of the danger. Along the way she meets Henry, a young boy running away from his boarding school. Together they find out that there are three men, led by Captain Reese, out to kill her father. Reese kidnaps Henry and tries to trade him for the location of Ella's father, but Ella and her new

friends Bay and Jesse are able to rescue Henry and escape. The journey rapidly becomes a dangerous adventure. They must travel through a dark cave, the Black Forest, and survive the rapids of Locksley River. Reese and his men are able to find Ella's father first, leaving Ella with only one chance left to save him. The adventure is filled with hilarious thrills, scary moments, and enough physical theater to keep young and old wondering what will come next!

SCENES

Prologue

Scene 1—Before the Beginning

Scene 2—The Runaway

Scene 3—Reese and His Men

Scene 4—Ella Flies

Scene 5—The House

Scene 6—The Inn

Scene 7—The Cave

Scene 8—The Black Forest

Scene 9—The Interrogation

Scene 10—The Rescue Plans

Scene 11—The Rescue

Scene 12—The Escape

Scene 13—The River

Scene 14—Locksley Cliffs

Prologue

MUSIC-Opening

ACTORS march on stage to the music in a pattern and then either off stage or (if they are in the first scene) sit on boxes that line up stage.

Scene 1—Before the Beginning

Scene opens with bare stage. Needed cast members are sitting randomly on boxes up stage. Each steps toward to tell their part of the story. They only come forward on their first line, not as a group. Some can sit on the edge of the stage, others stand. Even though the sentences are divided up between more than one NARRATOR, they must flow as if one person is saying it.

NARRATOR _____: Our story begins,

NARRATOR _____: And yet it doesn't.

NARRATOR _____: As there is always a before to every story.

NARRATOR _____: The happenings that happened prior to the beginning.

NARRATOR _____: Which is then not a beginning but really a middle.

NARRATOR _____: So we go back, before.

NARRATOR _____: Before her father's death . . .

NARRATOR _____: Before her stepsister's teasing . . .

NARRATOR _____: Before her stepmother's scorn . . .

NARRATOR _____: Before the royal ball . . .

NARRATOR _____: and glass slippers . . .

NARRATOR _____: Just how *before* are we going?

ELLA: Eight years.

ALL: Eight years before the beginning.

ELLA: (*STEPMOTHER and the two STEPSISTERS come forward or move to the side if they are also a NARRATOR.*) My dear widowed father married . . .

STEPMOTHER: A beautiful lady with two beautiful daughters. (*Everyone stares at her, puzzled. They ad lib.*) Well, we are!

NARRATOR _____: The stepmother was very kind to her two daughters but very mean to her stepdaughter, Ella.

FATHER: But only when her father was not around.

STEPMOTHER: Which was often.

NARRATOR _____: One day Ella's father was leaving on a trip and asked his daughter and step daughters

FATHER: What would you like me to bring you?

NARRATOR _____: His new stepdaughters asked him to bring them

STEPSISTER 1: pearls, elegant gowns,

STEPSISTER 2: a parasol and lace.

NARRATOR _____: While his own daughter, Ella asked him,

ELLA: Father, break off for me the first twig that brushes against your hat on your way home.

NARRATOR _____: Ella's father did as he was asked.

STEPMOTHER: Bringing beautiful pearls and jewels to his beautiful stepdaughters (*FATHER hands string of pearls and some lace to the STEP DAUGHTERS*)

NARRATOR _____: and a willow twig to Ella. (*FATHER hands ELLA a twig. ELLA is very happy.*) I would have asked for an unlimited Visa card.

ELLA: Thank you, father. (*She hugs him.*)

NARRATOR _____: Sometime later father said,

FATHER: I must travel to the far side of the kingdom for business.

ELLA: But father you have just returned from the far off other side of the kingdom last week.

FATHER: I am sorry, but duty calls. I will be gone for one month and will only think of you, my child.

STEPMOTHER: What about me?

FATHER: What about you? (*Beat.*) Take good care of my daughter, wife. I will return in a month. (*He moves off.*)

After each of the NARRATOR'S last line, they move back to the boxes. They do not move all at one time, but one at a time. Sometime during the following NARRATOR'S section, someone places two boxes, side by side, for the foundation for the TREE.

NARRATOR _____: With that, Ella's father rode off to the

NARRATOR _____: far reaches of the kingdom.

SOUND EFFECT: HORSE GALLOPING OFF

STEPMOTHER: Does my husband think of me only as a babysitter?

NARRATOR _____: The stepmother was not happy with her new husband,

NARRATOR _____: except, of course, for his money, which she wanted for herself and her daughters.

STEPMOTHER: (*Correcting him/her.*) Beautiful daughters!

NARRATOR _____: *(Same NARRATOR as the line before.)* Oh, beautiful daughters.

STEPSISTER 1: Mother, maybe you should get a new husband. After all, they say third times a charm.

STEPMOTHER: But that would mean I would have to get rid of the one I have. *(Realizing it.)* Not a bad idea.

STEPSISTER 2: And don't forget about Ella, we need to get rid of her too.

STEPMOTHER: Oh, but someone will need to wash your beautiful dresses and comb your beautiful hair.

STEPSISTER 2: How true, mother. *(They laugh and move off.)*

NARRATOR _____: Sad that her father was gone once again, *(ELLA begins to cry as she plants the twig.)*

NARRATOR _____: Ella took the twig and planted it on her mother's grave *(ELLA places the twig in front of several boxes side by side to form a platform for the TREE.)*

NARRATOR _____: and as her tears fell upon the twig it grew a beautiful tree. *(ELLA bows her head and cries.)*

MUSIC: TREE UP

Three actors enter and form a tree using six green umbrellas. They enter majestically, 2 positioning themselves on the two boxes, one stands in front of the boxes, slowly raise their umbrellas and then pop them open at the end of the music.

TREE: Weep my child. Go ahead. It's cathartic.

ELLA: *(Frightened.)* Is this tree talking to me?

TREE: Well, I'm not barking at you. *(TREE laughs. Shakes branches.)* Get it, barking? Tree bark? *(ELLA doesn't get it. TREE gives up.)*

ELLA: But trees don't talk.

TREE: Trees are smarter than you think, I'm a treegonometree. *(Laughs again. Stops.)* Sorry, I am knotty tree. *(Laughs again.)* Get it? Knotty tree? *(Stops laughing.)* Wow, this is a hard crowd. *(Clears throat. Seriously.)* I have risen from the twig to speak to you, Ella.

ELLA: To me? Is it only to me you speak?

TREE: Ah. You and Pocahontas.

ELLA: Oh. What is it you have to tell me?

TREE: *(Boldly.)* I warn you of impending danger that your father will face.

ELLA: Father? Will be in danger? But he is on a trip.

TREE: A trip from which he may never return.

ELLA: But I cannot lose my father after losing my mother.

TREE: *(Back to normal.)* That would make you an orphan and orphans are dirty creatures who say, *(with English accent)* please sir, I want some more.

STEPMOTHER: *(Move next to ELLA.)* You will not be an orphan, for you will work for me, cooking, cleaning, combing my daughters' hair. I will even give you a corner by the fireplace to sleep. *(STEP MOTHER laughs and drifts away back to the boxes.)*

ELLA: *(To the TREE.)* What should I do?

TREE: Too bad you are a girl. For a boy would rise up and journey to warn him.

ELLA: I am as good as a boy. *(TREE laughs.)* I am! *(An ACTOR who is sitting on the boxes, tosses a plastic axe to ELLA. ELLA threatens the TREE with the axe. TREE squeals and stops laughing.)* I will travel to find my father and warn him of the danger. And you, and all others, *(wheels axe around, actors on the boxes react)* will see that Ella is just as daring and as worthy as a boy.

TREE: It will be a dangerous journey filled with evil and a few rats that will prove to be helpful. So, I will grant you a magical power to aid you.

ELLA: What power do you speak of?

TREE: You will have the magical power of . . .

MUSIC: TREE DOWN

TREE: *(TREE starts to disassemble.)* Oh, sorry, but I have to leaves. Get it? Leaves? Leaves? *(TREE laughs, but ELLA doesn't.)* What a dead crowd! *(TREE is gone.)*

ELLA: The tree didn't finish telling me my magical power. I wonder what it could be. *(ELLA exits. NARRATORS step forward as before. On their last line they move back.)*

NARRATOR _____: So Ella decided that she would find her father to warn him.

NARRATOR _____: She chose not tell her stepmother

NARRATOR _____: for fear that she would prevent Ella from going.

NARRATOR _____: As Ella was packing, one of her stepsisters discovered her plan.

NARRATOR _____: Ella asked her not to tell and Ella thought

NARRATOR _____: she could trust her. But as it turned out

NARRATOR _____: the stepsister ran to her mother and told her of Ella's plan.

NARRATOR _____: But it was too late, Ella had gone.

STEPMOTHER: That ungrateful child.

STEPSISTER 2: Who will now wash the dishes, clean our clothes, and fetch the water?
(STEPMOTHER looks at her daughters.)

STEPSISTER 1: Not me! My hands are too soft to bear such work.

STEPSISTER 2: *(Looking at her hands.)* My hands are . . . wow! I need a manicure. We have to get Ella back.

STEPMOTHER: Never fear, my daughters. Mommy will take care of it. *(STEPSISTERS move up stage to boxes. STEPMOTHER moves to REESE. REESE becomes an evil villain.)*

STEPMOTHER: Do you understand?

REESE: Yes. I am to find Ella, gain the location of your husband from her . . .

STEPMOTHER: By any means.

REESE: By any means.

STEPMOTHER: Yet not so that she won't be able to cook and clean when she returns.

REESE: Of course. And then when I find her father.

STEPMOTHER: Do what you will to him. But return Ella to me and don't let her know that it was I who obtained your services.

REESE: Your secret is safe with me. And I will be paid handsomely for my efforts?

STEPMOTHER: Make sure that Lord Mason is gone for good and you will be paid a lot more than you can imagine.

REESE: I can imagine a lot.

STEPMOTHER: Are you trying to quibble with me?

REESE: Quibble, my lady? I never quibble. I merely desire a definition of 'a lot'.

STEPMOTHER: You will have to trust that my a lot will be a lot to you.

REESE: But a lot could range from chicken feed to a lot of caviar and champagne.

STEPMOTHER: A lot will be left to ponder then, won't it? Now, be gone with you. *(She begins to exit.)*

REESE: A lot said but little resolution.

STEPMOTHER: *(Turning back to REESE.)* And do not return until you are sure he will not. Otherwise, you will have to answer to me. *(She moves up stage to boxes.)*

REESE: *(To the audience.)* A lot to fear indeed.

Scene 2—The Runaway

NARRATOR _____: *(Moving down stage as before.)* And so our before the story adventure begins.

NARRATOR _____: Ella's journey will take her across the barren desert flats,

NARRATOR _____: through the thick woodlands,

NARRATOR _____: into the deep, dark caves,

NARRATOR _____: and beyond the black forest.

NARRATOR _____: Wow! Can't she just send a letter?

NARRATOR _____: Stamps cost money. *(All agree.)*

NARRATOR _____: Ella is unaware that Reese *(REESE steps down stage and makes a proud pose)* and his men, Avery. *(AVERY steps down stage.)*

AVERY: Hi. *(Waves proudly.)*

NARRATOR _____: And Drew. (*DREW isn't paying attention. Everyone looks at him.*) Drew!

DREW: Huh. (*Rushing down stage.*) Oh, hi.

NARRATOR _____: are also hunting for Ella.

NARRATOR _____: But their goal is much more different than our leading lady's.

NARRATOR _____: As Ella hastens to find her father,

NARRATOR _____: others race to find Ella.

NARRATOR _____: A race where the finish may spell the finish of one of our cast members. (*All cast members look at each other, suspiciously. They all ad lib, "I hope it's not me." "Do you think it could be me?" etc.*)

NARRATOR _____: The plot thickens! (*Everyone exits the stage. ELLA enters.*)

ELLA: How am I to find my father when I have no idea in which direction he went. (*She looks in all directions. Then settles on a way and start walking right stage.*) This way. (*Other ACTORS, quietly ad lib wrong way from off stage or peek their heads between the curtains for a moment. She pauses changes directions, starts to walk again.*) Maybe this way. (*The other ACTORS again ad lib wrong way, peeking between the curtains. She pauses again and then starts going in another direction.*) Then it must be this way. (*Again the ACTORS ad lib wrong way.*) Just tell me which way to go?

ALL: (*Peeking their head out again.*) North!

ELLA: North?! Through the desert flats?

ALL: (*Peeking again.*) North! (*ELLA accepts their advice and starts to walk and then suddenly, there is a commotion off stage.*)

GUARD 1: (*From off stage.*) There he is! (*HENRY rushes on and looks for a place to hide. ELLA is cautious.*)

ELLA: Who are you?

HENRY: I would stop and chat but I have to find a place to hide.

ELLA: Who or what are you hiding from?

HENRY: The two men who are after me.

ELLA: That would make sense, but more information is needed if I am to help you.

HENRY: No time. I must hide. *(Looks around.)* Great! I would have to enter the desert flats where there is not a tree, cacti, or backdrop to hide behind.

ELLA: Well, you look harmless. Quick hide behind me. *(He moves behind her and she grabs and spreads out his cape to hide him from the GUARDS. The GUARDS rush on.)* Good day, my friends. You seem to be in search of something.

GUARD 1: Yes, have you seen a young lad go by here?

ELLA: I have.

GUARD 2: Which way did he go?

ELLA: What has this boy done?

GUARD 2: He has run away from his boarding school.

ELLA: So he is an educated boy?

GUARD 1: He would be if he put more effort into his homework.

ELLA: Then he is a lazy, uneducated boy?

GUARD 2: Very. Please just tell us which way he went.

ELLA: The lazy, uneducated boy went that way. *(She points, making sure to keep HENRY hidden behind his cape.)*

GUARD 1: Thank you. *(They rush off. She releases his cape and HENRY comes out from hiding.)*

ELLA: So, you are a lazy, uneducated boy.

HENRY: I beg to differ.

ELLA: Please don't beg, it's very unbecoming.

HENRY: Then let me defend myself. I have run far to escape my pursuers.

ELLA: You have.

HENRY: So lazy, I am not.

ELLA: In actuality, your pursuers were gaining on you, so they were faster than you.

HENRY: But my heavy perspiration tells you that I engaged my full effort, which a lazy person would not do.

ELLA: Your odor confirms that.

HENRY: And I have been cunning enough to avoid them.

ELLA: But only with my help.

HENRY: This is true. But a factor in being cunning is selecting the right person to help you.

ELLA: Or is it a matter of luck?

HENRY: Luck sometimes arrives in the nick of time. *(Beat. He tips his head in thanks.)* I thank you for your help. *(Looking in the direction the GUARDS exited.)* Fools! And they call me lazy and uneducated.

ELLA: Actually, I was the one who called you lazy and uneducated.

HENRY: And we have just cleared that up, have we not?

ELLA: We have.

HENRY: Is my hair all right?

ELLA: Your hair?

HENRY: A guy needs to look good so others can look up to him.

ELLA: Really? You have not a hair out of place.

HENRY: Perfect. Who are you?

ELLA: I am Ella. Who are you?

HENRY: You do not know me?

ELLA: Just as a slightly lazy, yet still somewhat uneducated boy.

HENRY: I will not beg to differ again, for as you have said, it is unbecoming and I fear that I would not win anyway.

ELLA: You would not.

HENRY: *(Trying to hide his true identity.)* I'm just an ordinary guy, of no importance at all. Yep! That's me. Just an ordinary guy. My name is Henry.

ELLA: And why is it Henry, an ordinary guy of with perfect hair, that you are running away from your boarding school?

HENRY: Have you ever been to a boarding school?

ELLA: No, I can't say that I have.

HENRY: It is a dreadful place where they expect you to behave in a very specific manner.

ELLA: Dreadful.

HENRY: Sit up straight, raise your hand to speak, and never, ever use your dinner fork to eat your salad. Sacrilege!

ELLA: Blasphemy!

HENRY: And they teach you about ridiculous things such as history and foreign language. If someone wishes to speak to me, they should do it in my native tongue. Don't you think?

ELLA: Sí, ellos deben hablar su idioma. (*Spanish for—Yes, they should speak your language.*)

HENRY: (*He looks puzzled at her.*) Huh? (*Beat.*) Oh, and get this, if A equals B, and B equals C, then A equals C.

ELLA: (*Very puzzled.*) Puzzling! How can letters equal other letters? They're letters, not numbers.

HENRY: Exactly! They call it Algebra. When will I ever use such information in everyday life? A complete waste of time.

ELLA: And speaking of time, I must be on my way.

HENRY: Let me not delay you any further. But first may I ask; why are you dressed as a boy?

ELLA: I am not dressed as a boy, but as a girl on a journey.

HENRY: A journey? (*Laughs.*) But girls don't go on journeys. There are bandits and wild animals that inhabit the roads (*he trips on his own feet*) and rocks you can trip over. And there are other hazards that a gentleman would never mention to a lady. Girls are unequipped for such a trip. (*He turns away.*)

ELLA: (*She locks his arm behind his back.*) An uneducated boy shouldn't make assumptions.

HENRY: All right, all right! (*ELLA lets him go.*) I guess girls can go on a journey and protect themselves.

ELLA: You guess? (*Steps towards him.*)

HENRY: All right! Jeez, what a diva. (*Beat. Rubs his arm.*) What kind of journey are you . . . journeying?

ELLA: I must find my father and warn him of an impending danger.

HENRY: Ooh! That sounds very impressive. What kind of danger?

ELLA: I don't know.

HENRY: I see. And where is your father?

ELLA: I don't know exactly.

HENRY: I see again. Well then, when is this impending danger pending?

ELLA: I don't know that either.

HENRY: Well, for a girl on a journey, you don't know much.

ELLA: I will manage.

HENRY: Sounds like you need some help.

ELLA: Do you know anyone who is daring and brave who can help me?

HENRY: What about me?

ELLA: But I need someone daring and brave.

HENRY: (*Dramatically.*) That's a dagger to my heart.

ELLA: You'll live.

HENRY: But you will need a man.

ELLA: A man? But you're only a boy.

HENRY: Well, you're only a girl!

ELLA: I have not claimed to be anything but a girl.

HENRY: Then you need a boy to help you.

ELLA: I do not need a boy. And you seem to imply that you would be that boy. Tell me, why would you want to help a girl who you do not know?

HENRY: I need to get away from my pursuers and a journey sounds like fun.

ELLA: I don't know. You might slow me down.

HENRY: You saw how fast I can run.

ELLA: Only when being pursued.

HENRY: Fear does cause one to hustle. And, I have perfect hair! And I know Algebra!

ELLA: Which I cannot see how either will help in any way. (*HENRY smiles big.*) Oh, very well. But if you slow me down even a little, I will leave you behind. And I will be the leader.

HENRY: But . . .

ELLA: And what I say goes.

HENRY: But . . .

ELLA: No buts! Take it or stay here to face your pursuers as they will no doubt return for you.

HENRY: (*Reluctantly.*) Agreed. I think our first duty should be a nap and a meal.

ELLA: Hardly. (*She hears voices.*)

REESE: (*From off stage.*) This way!

ELLA: Listen! (*They go silent.*) Do you hear something?

HENRY: I don't hear anything.

DREW: (*From off stage.*) Wait for me!

HENRY: Now I do. Who do you think they are?

ELLA: Maybe they're the bandits you were telling me about.

HENRY: Bandits!

ELLA: Or your pursuers.

HENRY: Even worse!

ELLA: I think we better hide.

HENRY: But there is nowhere to hide and I don't think my cape will hide both of us. What do we do?

ELLA: I will grow a tree to hide behind.

HENRY: *(Beat.)* What?

ELLA: I will grow a tree and then we will hide behind the tree. *(She pulls a twig out of her pocket and starts to plant it.)*

HENRY: *(He turns away.)* I may be uneducated, but you are crazy. Everyone knows that it takes many, many years to grow a tree.

MUSIC: TREE UP

Three ACTORS enter and form a tree as before.

HENRY: *(Not hearing the music. Continues with his lines.)* And some trees grow very slowly, like the olive tree and they can live up to 1,000 years. *(He turns to see the tree.)* Whoa! Where did that tree come from?

ELLA: I grew it.

HENRY: OMG! You're a witch!

ELLA: I am not.

HENRY: *(Pleading. Falling to his knees.)* Please, PLEASE don't turn me into a frog.

ELLA: What? Why would I turn you into a frog?

HENRY: It's how the story goes.

ELLA: Wrong story, dude!

HENRY: Oh.

ELLA: And I am not a witch, and even if I were I would not turn you into a frog. Frogs have a bad enough rap as it is. *(Beat. HENRY is sure there is an insult in there but can't figure it out. He gets up.)* Now come on, hide behind the tree.

HENRY: But it could be a bewitched tree?

ELLA: Look, you can hide behind the tree or stay here and face whoever they are. I for one am going to hide. *(ELLA hides behind the tree.)*

REESE: *(Off stage.)* Drew! Hurry up! *(Hearing REESE, HENRY rushes behind the tree.)*

Scene 3—Reese and His Men

REESE: *(As he, AVERY, and DREW enter.)* And there in the sky, high above the trees, soaring through the clouds, a donkey riding on a dragon.

AVERY: *(Not believing it.)* A donkey?

REESE: *(Stops center stage.)* Yes, a donkey. I couldn't believe it meself, but I saw it with me own eyes. And as it passed above me, I could smell a hint of waffles.

AVERY: Waffles?

REESE: Waffles!

AVERY: And maple syrup?

REESE: Aye, Avery. And maple syrup. *(They smell the air, dreaming of waffles. They start stage walking in place. DREW is confused by this. He just stands there and watches them walk in place.)* You know, I like the title of captain, so call me Captain Reese.

AVERY: But you're not a captain.

REESE: *(They stop walking. Grabbing AVERY.)* If I say I be a captain, I be a captain and you will call me as such.

AVERY: *(Salutes.)* Aye, aye, captain.

REESE: That's Captain Reese, Avery.

AVERY: Got it. *(Beat. They walk in place again. DREW walks forward and runs into AVERY.)*

AVERY: Hey! Watch it! *(He pushes DREW back. They stop walking.)*

DREW: But we're not moving.

REESE: It's a stage walk, my confused friend, the scene comes to us.

AVERY: Can we rest, Captain Reese?

REESE: Rest? Rest?! *(To DREW.)* Avery wants to rest? *(To both.)* How can we fulfill the obligation, do the duty, collect the reward if we rest?

AVERY: But we have traveled non-stop for hours.

REESE: Success takes sacrifice, dedication, and loyalty, Avery.

AVERY: But those aren't words that describe delinquents like us.

REESE: Of course they are. I would gladly *sacrifice* you if it would benefit me. I am *dedicated* to making myself rich, and I am *loyal* to no one but myself.

AVERY: You would sacrifice me?

REESE: In a heartbeat. As you would sacrifice me, no doubt. (*AVERY ponders this then agrees.*) There is no nobility among thieves. And there is even less nobility among nobles. (*They laugh.*)

AVERY: Very well, we'll go on.

REESE: I think we should rest.

AVERY: What? But you just said . . .

REESE: When the captain says to rest, we rest.

DREW: Are we there yet?

REESE: Where?

DREW: There.

REESE: We can't be there if we are here.

DREW: But when will there be here?

REESE: When we are there.

DREW: (*Satisfied.*) Oh.

AVERY: Where are we headed, Reese? (*REESE gives AVERY a stern look.*) I mean, Captain Reese.

REESE: That is information that must be cloaked from the men.

AVERY: Why?

REESE: *(Pulling AVERY aside.)* I like to keep my men guessing. That's what a good leader does.

AVERY: The men, sir. *(REESE gives him a dirty look.)* Oh, ah, Captain Reese sir, the men would like to know.

REESE: If I told them all I know, why would they need me?

AVERY: That's true

REESE: An unfortunate fact.

AVERY: But there is only one other man.

REESE: You can never be too careful when it comes to mutiny, Avery. Drew may seem like a nitwit but he could be working for the other side. *(They look over at DREW. He is picking his nose.)*

AVERY: The other side?

REESE: Yes, the opposite side from our side.

AVERY. Oh. But I am your right hand man you can tell me.

REESE: I'm left handed.

AVERY: Then I will be your left hand man.

REESE: Sorry, but I don't trust those who lean to the left. *(Beat.)* My guess is she'll cut across the desert, crawl through the cave and venture through the black forest.

AVERY: Cave? We are going to crawl through a cave?

REESE: Unless we catch up to her before then. *(DREW comes up to REESE and starts tapping him on the shoulder. REESE ignores him at first.)*

AVERY: But the cave is filled with bats and creepy crawly things.

REESE: We will do what we must to capture her and find out the location of her father. *(Turning to DREW.)* What!?

DREW: Where's the little boys room?

REESE: The little boy's room?

DREW: Yeah, you know, I gotta go.

REESE: *(Looking around, eyeing the tree.)* Oh, do your business behind that tree.

DREW crosses behind the tree and REESE and AVERY crosses down stage looking away from the tree. During the next few lines ELLA and HENRY circle around to the front of the tree, trying to stay hidden from DREW yet staying close to the tree and be hidden from REESE and AVERY. When DREW is finished and comes back from behind the tree, ELLA and HENRY work their way back behind the tree. ELLA and HENRY over hear what REESE and AVERY are saying.

REESE: It will be a big payoff, Avery, a lot more than you can imagine.

AVERY: I can imagine a lot, Captain Reese. I hope my a lot is a lot like your a lot.

REESE: That's a lot to hope for. Split two ways, even a half a lot will still, I hope, be a lot.

AVERY: Two ways? What about Drew?

REESE: What about him?

END OF PREVIEW