

ACT I

SETTING: *An Appalachian water well, complete with bucket and dipper. A playing area that theatrically represents two different porches, miles apart. A rocking chair that exists for whoever needs it. Magic abounds. The time is now.*

AT RISE: *The stage is dark. Lights come up from inside the Well as music begins emanating from it – a song that holds memories and beckons all those that dream...*

**#1 The Well (instrumental)**

---

*(BECKY emerges from the shadows, slowly crossing to the Well, beckoned by its music. She peers down into it. Slowly, one-by-one, the rest of the ENSEMBLE enters, oblivious to the others, each one called by the Song. The last to enter is MAUD MULLER. They stare at the Well, mesmerized. The music shifts to...)*

**#2 Hallelujah**

---

## ENSEMBLE

*Close your eyes, open your ears  
Can you hear it echoing through the years  
The sorrow and joy  
Of those gone before  
This land holds their dreams  
She also holds yours*

*And the whippoorwills cry “hallelujah!”  
As the warblers sing “amen!”  
As time marches on  
Will you join their song?  
Will you learn to love the life that you’re in?  
Will you think about what might have been?*

*(The ENSEMBLE melts into the shadows during the following...)*

*Oh-oh-oh-oh ooooh oh-oh-oh-oh-oh  
Oh-oh-oh-oh ooooh oh-oh-oh-oh-oh*

*(Just as BECKY has almost disappeared, we hear the well beckon to her again.)*

### ***#3 The Well (reprise) (instrumental)***

---

*(BECKY stops and looks around. Again, the well beckons. BECKY crosses to it and peers in. The music continues. As BECKY raises the bucket from the well, the music increases in intensity. As BECKY removes the dipper from the pail and takes a drink, the music crescendos. MAUD enters.)*

MAUD

Where's them packin' boxes?

*(Music out. Lights shift to a warm spring Kentucky day. BECKY stares at the dipper.)*

BECKY

This water...

MAUD

Becky!

BECKY

This water... Wanna drink?

*(She offers the dipper to MAUD.)*

MAUD

No, I... You know we got indoor plumbing, right?

*(BECKY takes another drink.)*

C'mon, girl, house won't pack itself.

BECKY

Granny. Don't do it. Don't sell this place.

MAUD

What?!

BECKY

I can't stand the thought of you not living on this farm

Since when? MAUD

Since... BECKY

***#4 The Well (reprise) (instrumental)***

---

*(A few notes reminding BECKY of the magic. BECKY stares into the bucket. MAUD doesn't hear it.)*

You come here to help me pack. MAUD

I know. BECKY

Then fetch them packin' boxes from the shed. MAUD

Granny, wait. I just – BECKY

I got no choice. I need the money. Cedar Ridge ain't cheap. I need the money. MAUD

Then don't go to Cedar Ridge. BECKY

They tell me I'm lucky. MAUD

Who? BECKY

That some folks been on that waitin' list twice as long as me. MAUD

Yes, but... BECKY

No buts. Cedar Ridge's got an open spot comin' up in two weeks. I'm gonna take it. Which means we gotta get this house packed up fast. MAUD

BECKY  
You don't belong in a nursing home.

MAUD  
Retirement community.

BECKY  
Where you go to die...

MAUD  
Where you go to *live* – in a one-bedroom apartment with no more cookin', no more cleanin', no more feedin' chickens...

BECKY  
I'll hire you some help. That way we can keep the farm.

MAUD  
Keep the farm? You wanna live here?

BECKY  
Oh God. No.

MAUD  
Well, then...

BECKY  
But you... you should live here.

MAUD  
Why?

BECKY  
It's our home.

MAUD  
My home. You live in the city.

BECKY  
My home, too!

*(Beat. New tact.)*

When I tell my friends I'm going home for Christmas, this is where I mean. This farm. You. The memories we've made here.

MAUD

We'll make new memories at Cedar Ridge.

BECKY

Tell me you won't miss this place!

### ***#5 I Belong to the City***

---

MAUD

I... I...

BECKY

The mountains? The trees?

MAUD

Sure is pretty.

BECKY

The cows and corn fields and... and... and the well...

MAUD

*(Remembering)*  
The well...

BECKY

*(On a roll)*  
...and, and...

*(She takes a deep breath)*

*Mountain air, morning breeze  
There's nothing like Kentucky in the spring  
There's something here in the wind  
It casts a spell, draws you in*

*(The Well speaks to BECKY, begs her to come home. She fights it.)*

*I belong to the City  
I belong to the challenge of keeping up the pace  
Of staying afloat in the sea of faces  
Of pushing and rushing and lattes to go  
Of corporate castles all lined up in rows  
Yes, I belong to the City  
But you... you belong here*

BECKY (cont.)

*Where the sweet mountain laurel invades every sense  
And the horses are neighing from Farmer Brown's fence  
I can't imagine you anywhere else  
Where the bluegrass is glistening with droplets of dew  
And you can't help but feel you should take off your shoes  
For on this holy ground  
Is where my whole life is found  
I belong to the City  
But you belong to the mountains  
This I know is true  
And the mountains belong to you.*

MAUD

I can't. There's things... things you don't... I can't. I gotta leave this place. That's all there is to it.

BECKY

Then move in with me.

MAUD

Oh, hell no!

BECKY

That way you won't have to sell the farm...

MAUD

No way.

BECKY

Why not?

MAUD

I won't be a burden.

BECKY

Was I a burden?

MAUD

A child's never a burden.

BECKY

C'mon, Granny. When I was seven, I wet the bed every night for a year.

Loved every minute.

MAUD

How 'bout that playing-with-matches phase when I was ten?

BECKY

Typical kid stuff.

MAUD

How 'bout...

BECKY

Becky...

MAUD

Wait, wait – I got it. How 'bout that time I got liquored up on Granddaddy's hooch and drove his truck into the haystack?

BECKY

That warn't the only action that haystack saw that summer.

MAUD

What? Wait a minute... what?

BECKY

As I recall you and C.J. spent a few evenin's in there playin' "let's find the needle."

MAUD

Did you...? What?! How...?

BECKY

I watched.

MAUD

You...? You *spied* on me?!

BECKY

You bet. And if it ever looked like C.J. was goin' too far, I had my shotgun loaded. Luckiest day of his life was when you dumped him.

MAUD

I didn't dump him. He dumped me for Tammy Jo Sharp.

BECKY

MAUD

Tammy Jo Sharp?

BECKY

Rich girl? Daddy ran the bank in town? One time, at a school dance, I started flatfootin'. Tammy Jo called me a hillbilly.

MAUD

Oh, honey...

I learned your mommy how to flatfoot when she was just a little bitty thing.

### ***#6 Flatfootin' Lessons (instrumental)***

---

Made up a rhyme to help her. Same one I taught you – remember?

*(MAUD begins to move her feet as she teaches the lesson.)*

Step, step  
Here we go  
Scuff the heel, flap the toe  
Feel the music in your soul  
Step, step, step...

*(Music continues under. MAUD keeps moving her feet.)*

You want your feet close to the ground. Rooted to the earth. Only folks rooted to the earth can let their sprits soar...

BECKY

Granny...

MAUD

Most flatfooters dance solo – or you get lucky and meet someone match you step-for-step, feet hittin' the earth at the same time, connectin' you together in a single heartbeat. That's what happened when your mommy met your daddy. Shoo! That man could dance! Your mommy fell... A good flatfooter is... hard to resist.

BECKY

Granny!

*(Music out.)*



What? MAUD

She called me a hillbilly! BECKY

Who did? MAUD

*Tammy Jo Sharp!* BECKY

Maybe she meant it as a compliment? MAUD

No! She meant I was a redneck like, like... those stupid farm boys who drove stupid Ford pickup trucks and wore stupid John Deere caps. BECKY

You're describing your Granddaddy. MAUD

Granddaddy drove a Chevy. There was this guy... what was his name? Willy...? Billy...? Super redneck. Always telling me what he'd like to do to me on his tractor... Willy Mullins! That's his name. God, I hated that guy. BECKY

Rebecca! MAUD

All his t-shirts had stupid Lynyrd Skynyrd on them... BECKY

Leonard who? MAUD

To this day I can't hear *Freebird* without wanting to shoot someone... BECKY

(*Beat.*)

What were we talking about?

I have no idea.

MAUD

BECKY

*(Snapping her fingers)*  
 Tammy Jo Sharp! I was telling you how Tammy Jo Sharp called me a hillbilly and how C.J. picked her over me.

MAUD

That why you moved to the city, become a lawyer? Prove you was as good as Tammy Jo Sharp?

BECKY

No!

*(Beat. Is it?)*

No. I mean... I don't think so.

MAUD

You were better off without him.

BECKY

I had dreams, Granny. I was in love with him.

MAUD

What does a sixteen-year-old girl know about love?

BECKY

You weren't much older when you met Granddaddy, and you loved him.

MAUD

Huh.

BECKY

Didn't you?

MAUD

We need to get to work.

BECKY

Granny, you and Granddaddy...

MAUD

I don't wanna talk about that.

Granny... BECKY

Packin' boxes are in the shed. MAUD

You drive me crazy. BECKY

*(BECKY stomps off.)*

*(To herself)*  
MAUD  
And that's why I ain't gonna live with you.

*(MAUD exits into the house. The sounds of birds chirping, maybe a dog barks in the distance. After a moment, HECK enters the yard, carrying a 5-gallon plastic bucket. He is hot and sweaty and dressed in a dirty Lynyrd Skynyrd t-shirt, jeans, and work boots. He wears a John Deere cap. HECK crosses to the well and peers into the wooden bucket BECKY has left there. Finding water still in it, he empties it into his plastic bucket and lowers the wooden bucket back into the well. He is about to leave when...)*

### **#7 The Well (reprise) (instrumental)**

---

*(HECK turns back, beckoned to the Well as BECKY was before him. He puts his bucket down, raises the wooden bucket and takes a drink from the dipper. Music crescendos. BECKY enters from the offstage shed, carrying packing boxes.)*

Hello? BECKY

*(Music out.)*

This water... HECK

Excuse me? BECKY

This water... HECK

*(He takes another drink, this time straight from the bucket.)*

BECKY

Do I know you?

*(He lowers the bucket. She sees his hat and t-shirt and drops the packing boxes.)*

Oh my god! What are you wearing?

*(Off his confused look.)*

That hat. That Lynyrd Skynyrd t-shirt. Oh my god!

HECK

You like Lynyrd Skynyrd?

BECKY

If I had a gun, I'd shoot you.

HECK

Guess not.

BECKY

I swear to God, it's like PTSD or something.

*(She shakes her fist at the Heavens.)*

I hate you, Willy Mullins!

*(Beat. HECK stares at her. What the hell is going on?)*

This is private property. Which means you're trespassing.

HECK

That ain't a very neighborly word.

BECKY

Do you live close by?

HECK

Never seen this place before.

BECKY

Then you're not a neighbor.

HECK

In these parts, we look on everybody as a neighbor.

BECKY

Is that how you rationalize trespassing on private property? Stealing the water supply?

HECK

How 'bout you give me a minute to explain myself.

BECKY

You have five seconds. Go.

HECK

My truck died half- mile down the road. Cracked radiator.

BECKY

What kind of truck?

HECK

Ma'am?

BECKY

Ford pickup?

HECK

How did you...?

BECKY

Continue.

HECK

I was lookin' for some water, so I thought I'd...

BECKY

Help yourself to someone else's water supply.

HECK

I ain't a thief.

BECKY

And I am not unfamiliar with duplicitous declarations of innocence.

HECK  
You learn that in the city?

BECKY  
What?

HECK  
The way you talk, the way you look...

BECKY  
If your truck broke down, why not call for help? Or don't you own a cellphone?

*(He pulls the latest iPhone out of his back pocket and holds it up.)*

### ***#8 I Know Your Type***

---

Oh.

HECK  
That's right. Even us poor, ignorant rednecks carry cellphones.

BECKY  
I never said...

HECK  
Didn't have to. I've seen your type before...

*Pardon me for trespassing  
I'm just a simple man  
I barely know the meaning of the word  
Ain't got no PhD  
You best stay far away from me  
I'm practically barbaric  
As far as you're concerned*

*I know your type  
Stuck-up city girl  
Too good for folks like me  
Chihuahua in your purse as you  
Meet your friends for tea  
You hire help to clean your house  
So you don't break a nail  
Would I trade my life for yours, lady?  
No way in hell*

BECKY

*It seems that I have bruised your fragile  
Masculinity  
I'll get back in the kitchen where a  
Woman ought to be  
Tell me all about your day,  
Cuz honey, I'm your biggest fan  
Tonight I'll fake an orgasm  
So you feel like a man*

*I know your type  
Good ole country boy  
Eats only pork n beans  
A big ole truck to compensate  
For what's inside your jeans  
I'd like to stay and birth your children  
But I'll just bid you farewell  
Would I trade my life for yours, buddy?  
No way in hell*

HECK

*No way in hell*

BECKY

*No way in hell*

HECK

*You think you know me*

BECKY

*I know I do*

HECK/BECKY

*I've met a thousand people like you  
And folks like you are  
All the same*

BECKY

*So predictable*

HECK

*Egotistical*

BECKY

*A walking cliché*

HECK/BECKY

*So do me a favor  
And stay in your lane*

*I know your type  
You're the kind of girl/guy  
I keep my distance from  
Don't take it all that personal  
It's just a rule of thumb  
You keep on doing you  
Cause honey it's just as well  
Would I trade my life for yours, lady/buddy?  
No way in hell*

*(They end up eye-to-eye. Breathless. Intrigued. Awkward. Beat.  
Finally, BECKY takes a step back.)*

BECKY

So do it. Call Triple A.

HECK

Did already.

BECKY

Then why... the water...

HECK

Ain't for my truck.

BECKY

But you said... you said your radiator was...

HECK

Busted. Pour water in a busted radiator, leaks out all over the ground. I ain't no Sisyphus.

BECKY

Siss-a-what...?



HECK

Sisyphus. Zeus condemns him to spend eternity pushing this big boulder up a hill only every time it gets near the top, it slips away and rolls back down to the bottom? Homer wrote about him in *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*. Ain't you ever read the Greeks?

BECKY

Yes... no... I mean, I'm a lawyer. Lawyers read Latin.

HECK

That's too bad. I mean, Virgil's okay, but his *Aeneid* is a complete rip-off of Homer's *Iliad*.

*(Beat.)*

BECKY

Right.

*(Beat.)*

So... this water...

HECK

For my trees. Could be while before Triple A gets here. They're like to die in this sun.

BECKY

You have trees in the back of your truck.

HECK

Forty of 'em.

BECKY

How can forty trees fit...

HECK

They're saplings. I'm a tree farmer. That's "arborus agricolorus" in Latin.

BECKY

You *speak* Latin?

HECK

Nope. Made that up. Thanks for the water.

*(He exits with his bucket. MAUD enters from the house.)*

He's cute. MAUD

Still spying on me? BECKY

Yep. Who is he? MAUD

A farmer. BECKY

Damn. MAUD

A farmer who reads Homer. BECKY

Homer who? MAUD

(*To herself*) BECKY  
Sisyphus...

Siss-a-what? MAUD

BECKY  
I don't know. I don't know what's going on anymore.

(*She picks up the packing boxes.*)

Maybe it is time you left this place for good.

(*Beat.*)

I don't know. I just don't know.

***#9 Transition***

---

*(MAUD and BECKY exit into the house. The scene shifts to JUDGE PARKER's porch. Early evening. JUDGE PARKER enters from the house carrying a six pack of beer. He sits in the rocking chair, pulls out a beer, opens it and toasts himself.)*

JUDGE

Happy birthday to me, happy birthday to me, happy birthday, dear Henry, happy...

*(HECK enters carrying a book.)*

HECK

Evenin', Judge.

JUDGE

Heck. I wasn't expecting... Isn't this your day off?

HECK

Yes, sir.

JUDGE

So...

HECK

That lumber we ordered finally come in. Picked it up while I's in town. First thing tomorrow, I'll get to work patchin' up the barn.

JUDGE

Good man.

HECK

Also brought you this...

*(He gives the book to HENRY.)*

We was talkin' other day 'bout *The Iliad*. You said you'd like to read it again. That's the copy my mommy give me for my thirteenth birthday. Thought you might like to borrow it.

JUDGE

I'll start on it tonight. Heck... thank you.

HECK

You bet.

*(He starts to exit.)*

JUDGE  
 Could I interest you in a beer?

HECK  
 If you're buyin'.

*(JUDGE pulls a beer out of the cooler.)*

JUDGE  
 What took you into town today? Trees?

HECK  
 Forty blue spruce.

*(JUDGE hands him a beer.)*

Thanks, Judge. Almost didn't get 'em in the ground.

JUDGE  
 What happened?

HECK  
 Busted radiator.

JUDGE  
 You need a new truck, Heck.

HECK  
 I'm okay for now.

JUDGE  
 Is it the money? Because I could loan...

HECK  
 No sir. Got the money. Just don't want to spend it on a new truck.

JUDGE  
 Saving for your farm.

HECK  
 Them two acres I got, that's just a start... But I appreciate the offer.

*(JUDGE nods. They each take a pull on their beer. Beat.)*