

# **The Last Frontier**

**A musical in two acts.**

**Music and Lyrics by Beth DeVolder  
Book by Michael Armstrong**

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### **Cast of Characters**

Ron Laney  
Joanne (Jo) Laney  
Frank Gilmore  
Grandmother  
Milly

#### **The Women's Club**

Gertie Beatty  
Jane Williams  
Caroline Hines  
Marie Claire Trembley  
Amelia Hines

#### **The Men of the Woods**

Cal DeLaittre  
Gin Pole  
Windy Jack  
Frenchie  
Oly Olafson  
Happy and Mack  
Buddy, the cook  
Crook Neck Mike  
The Pump Man

#### **Miscellaneous Others**

Les Beatty, the Indian agent, husband of Gertie  
Mr. Hansen  
Mrs. Hansen  
Arvid  
Conductor  
Harvey

### **Setting**

Northern Ontario, September 1912 – May 1913.

The play is set in the fictional logging camp of Gannon and in the woods surrounding it, and the town of Windy River just five miles south.

Throughout the play, the lumberjacks act as stage hands, striking and assembling sets in a flurry of activity that echoes the busy-ness of camp life.

### **Note**

In the writing of this script, the authors have consulted with First Nations knowledge keepers and with cultural advisors from the disability community.

All the music is original with the exception of Who Stole the Lock and We'll All A Lumbering Go which are traditional from the period. Roll Out Jacks liberally borrows from Scott Joplin rags.

## **ACT ONE**

### **Prelude**

*Lights snap on. 1912. Winnipeg.*

*A train idles in the station.*

*Milly and Joanne stand down stage clasping hands. Around them, others stand frozen in tableau.*

*The conductor, his watch in hand. Ron at the door to the passenger car.*

*Milly and Joanne sing.*

*Milly*

I'm going to miss you

*Joanne*

I just want to settle down, I'm tired

*Milly*

I know, you're so tired of moving

*Joanne and Milly*

I love you, I'll write//

I dream of a little town, // a home

A place of my choosing//

//A little town, to settle down

*Suddenly, everything springs to life. The noise and confusion of the train platform. A train whistle. A car horn.*

### **Harvey (off-stage)**

Milly, for God's sake! Come on!

*The conductor calls as the lumberjacks enter, full of raucous energy, and crowd onto the train. Joanne and Milly are pulled apart. All the lines tumble over one another.*

### **Lumberjacks**

Hey Cal! You son of a gun! Frenchie! Oly! Where the hell you been all summer! Damnit, Windy, I thought you moved west! Etc.

### **Conductor**

All aboard that's coming aboard! Fort Frances, Thunder Bay, Toronto and all points east!

### **Ron**

Come on, Joanne! We have to get aboard!

*They board the train and it departs the station.*

### **Milly**

Joanne! Joanne!

*Joanne leans out the window and they wave to each other as the train begins to pull away and Milly recedes into the distance.*

*Through the rhythmical stomping of the lumberjacks feet and their raucous shouting, we hear the train speed up and then slow down as it arrives in Gannon. During the trip they sing.*

**Lumberjacks**

Who stole the lock?

I don't know.

Who stole the lock from the shit house door?

Gotta find out before I go

Tell me, who stole the lock from the shit house door?

**Scene One**

*This transition is quick, stylized and full of energy.*

*The lumberjacks call out as they exit the train.*

**Lumberjacks**

Here we go! Another season in the woods, boys! Another season of Buddy's cooking! Etc.

*They bundle off the train and Joanne and Ron are swept out with them. Frank makes his way onto the platform against the tide of arriving loggers. The music for The C & RL Company picks up on the rhythm of the train and underscores the dialogue until the vocals start.*

**Frank**

Doc! Hey Doc! Over here!

**Ron**

Thank god. Frank! It's Mr Gilmore, Jo. Frank!

*Frank pounds Ron on the back.*

**Frank**

You made it OK! This the missus?

**Ron**

Joanne, this is Mr. Gilmore. He's in charge.

**Joanne**

Mr. Gilmore.

**Frank**

*Pumping Joanne's hand.*

Call me Frank. I'm the head push. Welcome to Gannon. 'Bout as far from civilization as you can get but we're changing that, one tree at a time.

Well, first thing, this here is the Canadian and Rainy Lake Logging Company! The C and RL!

**The C and RL Company: Logging the Last Frontier**

*Frank*

The C and RL Company is  
Rolling onward  
Steaming forward  
Pressing on  
Oh yes, the C & RL Company has  
Kicked into high gear  
Logging the last frontier

We built the town of Gannon  
It's a brand new site  
We've got a pump-house and a telephone  
And e-lectric lights

**RON**

Electric lights?

*Frank*

Yes, electric lights!  
We raised a dozen buildings  
In under one year (And that's with all the logging work still going on)  
Now, Gannon welcomes you, my dear

*The musical underscore continues as one of the jacks yells from across the street.*

**CAL**

Well dangit, Frenchie! I might as well shit fire and light a match!

*Frank turns and calls out to the pair.*

**FRANK**

You two! Come here!

**CAL**

Yessir!

**FRANK**

You might want to watch your mouth.

**CAL/FRENCHIE**

Sorry. / J'ai merdé.

**FRANK**

This here is Doc Laney and his wife. You take these bags over to their cabin. Maybe fire up the stove while you're at it.

**CAL/FRENCHIE**

Yessir./ Oui.

*They grab up the luggage and hustle off. Cal looks over his shoulder at Joanne. Frenchie curses under his breath.*

**FRENCHIE**

Chalice.

**FRANK**

Sorry about that. Their language is a mixture of sawdust and hell hot profanity. You'll get used to it, I suspect. They're just blowing off steam from a summer in town. A week in the woods, they'll be singing a different tune.

*(More and more chorus members enter to join in the song.)*

The C & RL Company is  
Rolling onward  
Steaming forward  
Pressing on  
Oh yes, the C & RL Company has  
Kicked into high gear  
Logging the last frontier

**FRANK**

Well, right here is the coal dock. That there's the machine shop, home to the Steel Gang.

**RON**

Steel gang?

**FRANK**

Oh, they're the lads that lay 'n pick up track, and fix the trains, a never ending job. Boys, meet Doc Laney and his missus.

*Steel Gang (Barber Shop-like)*

We've 15 locomotives  
Laid a thousand miles of track  
We turn the wheels of progress  
And there ain't no turning back  
No turning back

*Frank*  
 The C & RL Company  
 Has kicked into high gear  
 Logging the last frontier  
*(Music continues as underscore.)*

**FRANK**

Well, here's my headquarters. Les Beatty here is the Indian agent.

**LES**

*(Waving.)* Howdy folks!

**FRANK**

You'll meet his wife, I'm sure.

Oh, and that there's young Crook Neck Mike.

**MIKE**

Howdy, Mr. Gilmore!

**FRANK**

Stop by the office later, Mike. We're getting a little static on the phone.

**MIKE**

Yes sir!

*Amelia Hines, a young woman on a mission, crosses paths with Crook Neck Mike. She smiles. Mike tips his hat. There is obviously more between them than meets the eye.*

**MIKE**

Miss Hines.

**AMELIA**

Mike.

*Amelia blushes and carries on.*

**FRANK**

The boss's niece. She runs mail back and forth from the office.

*(The cook, Buddy, waves.)* That's Buddy over there. He's the cook up in Camp 20. We feed these boys like kings. Keeps 'em coming back.

*Lumberjacks*  
 We've a full thousand woodsmen  
 And since nineteen-O-nine (1909)  
 We've cut a hundred fifty million  
 Board feet of white pine

**JOANNE**

How much is that?

**FRANK**

Enough to build over ten thousand two-story houses.

**JOANNE**

My.

*Full chorus*

Oh yes, the C & RL Company has  
Kicked into high gear  
Logging the last frontier

The C & RL Company is  
Rolling onward  
Steaming forward  
Pressing on.  
Oh yes, the C & RL Company has  
Kicked into high gear  
Logging the last frontier.

*Frank*

Our crowning achievement  
You may well have heard

*Full Chorus*

We own the blessed, blasted, bloomin', biggest  
Sawmill in the world  
In the world

We turn the wheels of progress  
And there ain't no turning back  
The C & RL leads the pack.

The C & RL Company  
Has kicked into high gear  
Logging the last frontier

*The chorus disperses, the town disappears and they find themselves standing in front of a small cabin.*

**FRANK**

And this here's your new home. In front is the Doc's office and the surgery and at the back a couple of rooms for the two of you.

**RON**

Thank you, Frank.



**FRANK**

*(Looking at Joanne.)* My pleasure.

*It is early evening and standing at the edge of the shadows is an old Ojibwe woman. She carries a large pack on her back and is smoking a pipe. She looks at them silently.*

**JOANNE**

Who is that?

**FRANK**

That's Grandmother. She's just an Indian. Pay her no mind. She comes in from the reservation. Brings meat and rice to trade here for this and that. She's a strange one. Hardly ever says a word. Get along, Granny. Go home.

*Grandmother ignores him.*

I'll leave you here. I've still got a little "pushing" to do before my day is done.

*Frank walks away leaving Ron and Joanne on their own front porch. Grandmother continues to smoke and stare silently.*

**RON**

Well, I'm beat. Come on inside, Jo.

*He crosses and enters the cabin, leaving Joanne on her own.*

*Joanne turns and looks at Grandmother. After a moment, she waves to her.*

**JOANNE**

Hello.

*There is no response. Then the woman moves away.*

**JOANNE**

Well, that was odd.

## **Scene 2**

*Joanne enters the cabin. Ron comes in from the bedroom.*

**RON**

Home, sweet home, my dear. What do you think of it?

**JOANNE**

Not exactly the settling down you promised when I married you, Doctor.

**RON**

Now hold on. This may not be much but our future is laid out ahead of us from this very humble beginning.

*(Music begins.)*

**JOANNE**

Gannon.

**RON**

Frank Gilmore thinks very highly of it.

**JOANNE**

*(Sarcastically.)* The Eighth Wonder of the World.

**RON**

Okay, I know it's a far cry from where we fell in love.

**JOANNE**

The World's Fair.

**RON**

Six years ago.

### **From the Top of the World**

*(Intro)*

*Joanne*

There were fountains and gardens  
Spectacular sights  
Exotic Places and people  
Mr. Edison's lights

*Ron*

Then, to top the Eiffel Tower  
An invention made of steel  
I tip my hat to Mr. Ferris  
And his famous Ferris wheel

*(Ron sings, Joanne echos)*

I saw your face alight (Face alight)  
A smile of pure delight (Pure delight)  
The golden moonlight shining on your hair (Shining in the moonlight)  
You shuddered as we rose (Mmm, I shuddered)  
And as I pulled you close (Oh, so close)  
Our grand bird cage lifted through the air (Lifted through the air)

*Ron and Joanne*  
 My heart leapt  
 My breath caught  
 And the ferris wheel twirled  
 And we could see our future  
 From the top of the world  
 My heart leapt  
 My breath caught  
 And the ferris wheel twirled  
 And we could see our future  
 From the top of the world

*(Joanne sings, Ron replies)*  
 I felt your eyes on me (Eyes on you)  
 Watching expectantly (The things you do)  
 The summer breezes drifting in the night (Drifting in the moonlight)  
 The two of us alone (Just the two of us)  
 The scent of your cologne (There alone)  
 As we lifted, you held me tight (I held you so tight)

*Ron and Joanne*  
 My heart leapt  
 My breath caught  
 And the ferris wheel twirled  
 And we could see our future  
 From the top of the world  
 My heart leapt  
 My breath caught  
 And the ferris wheel twirled  
 And we could see our future  
 From the top of the world  
 And we could see our future  
 From the top of the world

**RON**

Come to bed.

*The lights fade and night comes on.*

### **Scene 3**

*Inside the cabin. The clinic. We can see the front door and the bedroom door. Nighttime. Though we can't see them, Ron and Joanne are asleep in their bed.*

*The silence is interrupted by the sound of horses and a buggy approaching.*

**MIKE** (off)

Hurry, hurry! Careful there!

*There is a loud banging on the door.*

**MIKE** (off)

Doc! Doc! Open up! Emergency! For God's sake, open the door!

*Joanne calls from the bedroom.*

**JOANNE** (off)

Ron! Ron! /Somebody's at the door!

**RON** (off)

What? /What is it?

**MIKE** (off)

For God's sake, Doc, open the door! They're gonna bleed to death out here!

*Ron stumbles out of the bedroom. into the clinic. He calls back to Joanne.*

**RON**

You better get something on, Joanne. I might need you.

*He opens the front door revealing young Crook Neck Mike with two lumberjacks, Mack and Happy, two Finns with a notorious alcohol problem. The jacks are drunk and their necks are both wrapped in bloody bandages which they hold tightly to their wounds. Their mackinaws are covered with blood and flour. They look horrific: ghostly and comic.*

**MIKE**

Thank god.

*Mike pushes the bloody jacks into the cabin. They're both drunk, very weak and belligerent. They've lost a lot of blood.*

*Joanne enters in a robe.*

**RON**

My lord! What is going on here?

**MIKE**

They're drunk. Got into an argument and slit each other's throats.

**RON**

Well, doesn't look like they did a very thorough job of it.

*(To Joanne.)*

Get me some water and some towels.

*Joanne pours water from a kettle on the stove into a basin and wets a cloth.*

**RON**

What were they fighting about?

**MIKE**

They don't remember.

**RON**

Hush. Sit down here.

*The two lumberjacks sit down in chairs facing up stage. The doctor bends over them.*

**RON**

What have we got? Give me a towel, Jo.

*Joanne passes him a wet towel. Ron pulls the improvised dressing away from Mac's neck. Mac cries out in pain.*

**MAC**

Raukka!

*Ron dabs at the wound a little to clean it up so he can see it.*

**MIKE**

They were in the hotel down in Windy River, drinking. The cook, he tied flour round their necks with these here dishcloths. To try to soak up the bleeding I guess. Told me to bring 'em here. This one's Mac and this here is Happy.

*Ron pushes the now bloody towel back onto Mac's neck and places Mac's hand on it.*

**RON**

You hold this here. Hold it.

*Mac nods.*

**MIKE**

They's Finns, both of them. And they drink like fish. They's been trouble a long time but Jesus they're good loggers, Mr. Gilmore says. When they ain't drunk.

*Ron pulls the improvised dressing off of Happy's neck. Happy grunts.*

**RON**

Joanne!

*She is standing by with another wet towel and hands it to him. Mike is nervous and doesn't know quite what to say.*

**MIKE**

They's good loggers. Both of them.

**RON**

Mike, is it?

**MIKE**

Folks here call me Crook Neck.

**RON**

Well, Mike, you hold on to Happy here.

**MIKE**

Can you save em? They gonna die?

**RON**

Not if I can help it. You keep a steady pressure on this bandage here until I can get to him. It'll slow the flow of blood. I can only sew up one at a time and Mac looks like he needs me first. Okay?

**MIKE**

Yes sir. I got it.

**RON**

Steady pressure. Just don't choke him to death. Needle and thread, Jo.

*Ron leans back in over Mac. Carefully he removes the makeshift bandage again and swabs the wounds with the towel. He is covered with blood now.*

*Ron works in a kind of ritual dance. Time has slowed and the lights have shifted into high angles and shadows.*

*Joanne watches him, fascinated, and sings.*

### **A Breath Away**

Oh, so much blood  
The floor is stained  
Against the odds  
His needle strains

A fragile thread  
Where stitch by stitch  
A life is held  
At his fingertips

Held at bay  
Death waits, a breath away

*Happy is fading under Mike's hands but he doesn't notice. Mike has been watching the doctor at work. He suddenly realizes something is wrong.*

**MIKE**

Doc?

**RON**

*(Continues to work on Mac.)*

Mm.

**MIKE**

Doc!

*Ron looks up from Mac's throat to see Happy slumped in his chair.*

**RON**

Oh, lord. Jo! Come here! Take this!

*(He passes her the needle and thread. )*

Clean this up!

*Ron crosses to Happy. He pulls away the makeshift bandage and begins to work on him. Meanwhile, Joanne cleans up Mac and there is a synchronicity to their movement. When she's done, she turns to watch her husband.*

*Ron checks Happy's pulse. There is nothing there.*

**RON**

His heart has stopped. He's lost far more blood than I thought. How long ago was the fight?

**MIKE**

An hour. Maybe a little longer.

**RON**

Christ. We may have lost him. Lay him down. On the floor.

*They lay Happy down on the floor. Ron kneels beside him and starts chest compressions.*

*Joanne*

The air is thick

The veil is thin

A breath released

A breath held in

Here with these men

So rough and wild

I almost see

To the other side

Held at bay  
Death waits, a breath away  
A breath...

*Ron checks the neck bandage and then gives up. Happy is dead.  
He stands and looks at Joanne.*

**RON**

There's no blood left to pump.

*Ron and Joanne stare at each other over the blood and the body of Happy. Mike is in tears.*

#### **Scene 4**

*Next morning. Ron stands on the front steps of the cabin. We hear the sound of insects buzzing. He is stunned by the night's events. Joanne steps out behind him with coffee.*

**JOANNE**

I found some coffee on the shelf.

**RON**

Thank you.

**JOANNE**

There's no cream or sugar.

*Long pause.*

Did you get any sleep?

**RON**

No.

**JOANNE**

Welcome to Gannon.

*Ron lets out a strangled laugh.*

*Gertrude Beattie enters, waving and full of bonhomie.*

**GERTIE**

Helloooo. Hellooo. Oh, hello there. Welcome, welcome.

*(She extends a hand to Joanne and shakes her hand vigorously. )*

I've come to welcome you to Gannon. I'm Mrs. Beattie. Gertrude. Gertie. My husband is the Indian agent. Welcome to Gannon. Welcome. There are so few women hereabouts. Well, decent women. I'm so glad to meet you.



**JOANNE**

Mrs. Laney. Joanne. This is my husband. Dr. Laney.

*Gertie turns her attentions to Ron.*

**GERTIE**

Welcome to Gannon, Doctor. We're so lucky to have you. I hope you stay longer than Dr. Schwartz. He started so well but ended up being such a disappointment.

*(She tips her fingers to mimic drinking. She turns back to Joanne.)*

Liked his schnapps. If you know what I mean.

*(She proudly brings a neatly wrapped little package out of her bag. )*

Here you are. Bit of a housewarming gift for you.

*She holds it out. There is no response from either Ron or Joanne.*

**GERTIE**

*(With enthusiasm.)* It's a fruitcake!

*Joanne hesitantly takes the gift. No one smiles.*

**JOANNE**

*(Dryly.)* Fruitcake. Thank you.

**GERTIE**

Everyone is so somber. Well, I see you haven't had your coffee yet. Les is like that in the morning. My husband. The Indian Agent. Don't talk to him before he's had his coffee. Ha ha.

*Still nothing from Ron and Joanne.*

Why the long faces? Did someone die?

*She laughs long at her own joke.*

**JOANNE**

Yes, as a matter of fact. Someone did die. Last night. In there. In the middle of the night. Bled to death on our floor.

*Gertie is genuinely shocked and apologetic.*

**GERTIE**

Oh, my lord! I'm so sorry! I had no idea. And here I am with my jolly jolly and my bad timing. I don't know what to say. Can we start this again? Oh lord. I'm such a fool.

**JOANNE**

You didn't know. How could you know?

*Frank Gilmore enters. He is in a hurry.*

**FRANK**

Doc! Doc! We have an emergency. No rest for the wicked.

**RON**

What do you mean?

**FRANK**

Up at Camp 20. One of the jacks. I'm not sure what's going on. They said something about mosquito bites.

**RON**

Mosquito bites?

**FRANK**

Yeah, it doesn't make any sense. Grab your bag. And you better get your boots on. It's a five mile slog in from the rail line. Hurry up now. They're holding the train for you.

**RON**

Here, take this.

*He passes his untouched coffee to Joanne and exits back into the cabin.*

**FRANK**

Mrs. Beattie.

**GERTRIE**

Mr. Gilmore.

*(It's clear that she is not very fond of him but she just can't help herself.)*

Did you hear? Someone died here last night. Bled to death on the floor. Mrs. Laney was just telling me all about it. Poor dear.

*(She pats Joanne's hand.)*

Poor dear.

**FRANK**

Happy Happonnen. Mac Mäkinen slit his throat. They'll both be on the train with your husband this morning, Mrs. Laney. One last trip together. Happy in a box bound for the morgue. Mac in handcuffs headed for the lock up. They'll be hard to replace.

*Joanne doesn't know what to do.*

**FRANK**

It's a tough life in the camps. Listen, I'm gonna take some folks out on the lake in the company boat next weekend while it's still warm. Why don't you and the doctor come along, meet a few people, a chance to catch your breath?

**JOANNE**

Well...

**GERTIE**

Oh, do. Les and I will be there.

**FRANK**

I know. My timing's not good.

*Ron reenters from the cabin. He is in his jacket and boots. He has his doctor bag.*

**FRANK**

There you are.

**RON**

I'm ready.

**FRANK**

Well, follow me.

*He turns to head off. Ron moves to follow but Joanne grabs his arm.*

**JOANNE**

Ron?

**RON**

I have to go, honey. It's what they pay me for. It's quite the adventure isn't it? My lord.

**JOANNE**

There's still blood all over the floor, Ron.

**RON**

I'm sure you can deal with it. I have faith in you, woman.

*He gives her a peck on the cheek.*

**FRANK**

Coming?

**RON**

Yep.

*Frank slaps Ron on the shoulder and they're gone, leaving the two women on the porch. There is a long pause as the women watch the men disappear.*

**GERTIE**

You watch that Frank Gilmore. He's a philandering rogue.

**JOANNE**

But charming.

**GERTIE**

Yes. A charming philandering rogue.

*Joanne passes Ron's coffee to Gertie.*

**JOANNE**

Here. It shouldn't go to waste.

**GERTIE**

You must come to our women's meetings down in Windy River. Every second Thursday for tea. We talk about everything that's not allowed when the men are about.

**JOANNE**

Hmm. Bring it inside. We'll heat it up. We can have it with the fruitcake. Careful, you'll have to step over the blood.

**GERTIE**

Ohhh. My lord! That is a lot of blood.

*They enter the cabin.*

**Scene 5**

*Music. Joanne is at the kitchen table, writing a letter . Milly is sitting with her and reading the letter she has writtten.*

*(As the play progresses, these short scenes between Milly and Joanne become more and more conversation like. Milly seems present in the scenes and, though Joanne can't actually see her, she addresses her as though in conversation and the artifice of "letter writing" drops away.)*

**JOANNE**

Oh Milly, what a day it's been.

**That Oh-No-What-Have-I-Done-I'm-In-Trouble-Panicky-Sense**

When I was a girl, I don't know maybe 7 or 8  
There was the grandest of trees at my Pappy's place  
It's limbs were fat and close to the ground  
And it just called for me to climb it  
So, I climbed up. It was exciting and fun  
But, when I looked down, I thought, "What have I done?"

That oh-no-what-have-I-done-I'm-in-trouble panicky sense  
That I felt at the top of the tree  
After one day, just one day in Gannon  
That's exactly how I feel

*Milly shakes her head and laughs.*

**MILLY**

The wilderness. What did you expect? For my part, I am officially abandoned. Harvey left this morning for the winter to work in a camp up north. At least you have Ron. Perhaps I'll go home to Mother. Love you, Sister.

*Milly gets up and exits.*

**JOANNE**

That oh-no-what-have-I-done-I'm-in-trouble panicky sense  
 That oh-no-what-have-I-done-I'm-in-trouble panicky sense  
     That what-have-I-done-panicky-sense  
     After one day, just one day in Gannon  
     That's exactly how I feel

*Joanne has finished her letter and puts it in an envelope.*

*Ron enters with his coat and medical bag.*

**RON**

I feel alive; It's an adventure  
 I will survive, this grand adventure  
     I'll prove myself  
     Resourceful and strong  
     I'll meet the challenge  
     I have no doubt that  
     This is right where I belong

**JOANNE**

That oh-no-what-have-I-done-I'm-in-trouble  
     panicky sense  
 That oh-no-what-have-I-done-I'm-in-trouble  
     panicky sense  
     That what-have-I-done-panicky-sense  
     After one day, just one day in Gannon  
     That's exactly how I feel

**RON**

I feel alive; It's an adventure  
 I will survive, this grand adventure  
     I'll prove myself  
     Resourceful and strong  
     I'll meet the challenge  
     I have no doubt that  
     This is right where I belong

*(Song ends on a long, discordant note).*

**Scene 6**

*The women are gathered in Gertie's parlour in Windy River. There is tea and the kaffuffle of improvised conversation. There is a knock. Gertie hurries to the door. Joanne is there. Gertie ushers her in and takes her coat.*

**GERTIE**

Oh, hello! Welcome, welcome! I'm so glad you came. Come in!

*She re-enters the parlour with Joanne on her arm.*

**GERTIE**

This is Mrs. Laney. She'll be joining our group.

**JANE**

Thank the lord!

*Gertie speaks as she pours Joanne a cup of tea.*

**GERTIE**

Her husband is Dr. Laney, the new doctor for the company in Gannon.

Let me introduce you to everyone. This is Mrs. Angus Williams. Mrs. Laney.

**JANE**

Jane. My goodness, it's good to see another feminine face here in the wilderness.

**JOANNE**

Thank you.

**JANE**

My dear husband is the minister at the Lutheran Church in Windy River. I lead the choir. Are you, by chance, a Lutheran?

**JOANNE**

Presbyterian.

**JANE**

Close enough.

*Gertie turns to the next woman.*

**GERTIE**

And this is Mrs. Beaulieu.

**MARIE-CLAIRE**

Tremblay.

**GERTIE**

Oh, I do apologize. Of course. I keep forgetting. Her husband is Beaulieu. He owns the lodge on the lake.

**MARIE CLAIRE**

Why would you change your name?

**GERTIE**

Yes, yes. Well. "Tremblay," Mrs. Laney.

**MARIE CLAIRE**

Bonjour. I am Marie Claire.

**JOANNE**

And I am Joanne.

**MARIE CLAIRE**

Joanne. Bien venue. Welcome to the backside of nowhere.

*Joanne laughs. Gertie and Jane look a little put out.*

**GERTIE**

And finally, Mrs. Edward Hines.

**CAROLINE**

Caroline.

**GERTIE**

Her husband is the president of the entire Canadian and Rainy Lake Company.

**JOANNE**

Really?

**CAROLINE**

Yes. And this is my niece, Amelia.

**AMELIA**

How do you do?

**JOANNE**

Hello. Didn't I see you on the street in Gannon when we arrived the other day?

**AMELIA**

Maybe.

**JOANNE**

Yes. You were smiling at some young man.

**CAROLINE**

What young man?!

**AMELIA**

No, no. You must be mistaken

**JOANNE**

No, you were blushing. I remember.

**CAROLINE**

What young man?

**JOANNE**

That Mike who works the telephone lines.

**CAROLINE**

Oh, that boy with the crook neck? He's a hard luck case. I feel sorry for him.

*Joanne changes the subject.*

**JOANNE**

Aren't the offices of the C & RL an hour down the line in Fort Frances?

**CAROLINE**

What? Yes.

*Marie Claire pats Amelia on the head and whispers to her,*

**MARIE CLAIRE**

Good for you, ma chere.

**JOANNE**

I don't understand. Why would you come all the way up here on the train? Surely, there must be women in Fort Frances who meet.

**CAROLINE**

Indeed there are. In fact, I have been a member of the group in Fort Frances for a number of years. I am also, however, here representing the Winnipeg Council of Women and as part of my duties I work to start similar clubs in other communities. And granted, even though Windy River is, as Marie Claire so eloquently puts it, "the back end of nowhere" there is an interested group here and every voice counts.

**GERTIE**

So you see, Joanne, you have arrived here just in time to join our mission.

**JOANNE**

Your mission?

*Gertie starts the song and the women join in.*



**We Won't Stay Silent Anymore**

*Gertie*

We're out to change the world  
One obstinate, thick-headed man at a time  
And we won't stay silent anymore

No, we won't stay silent anymore  
We've found our voice like we never have before

*(Women Join)*

Heads held high, we declare our dignity  
You can't deny we're changing history

*Scene moves onto the street.*

*As they sing, women grab their coats and pick up signs. Some men working near-by notice their signs and "shout" out.*

No, we won't stay silent anymore  
We're mobilizing girls from shore to shore  
We're out to change the world  
One obstinate, thick-headed man at a time  
And we won't stay silent anymore

*Man One*

"Women should be seen and not heard"

*Women*

We won't stay silent!

*Man Two*

"Silence is a woman's glory"

*Women*

No, we won't stay silent!

*Man Three (Les Beatty)*

In the "Court of Silence", women should be queens

*Gertie makes a face at him.*

*Gertie*

"Let men have their way," is really what that means!

*As women sing the following chorus, the set becomes a city street. The crowd grows with fashionable men and women and a soap box/podium appears.*

*Women*

No, we won't stay silent anymore  
 We've found our voice like we never have  
     before  
 Heads held high, we declare our dignity  
 You can't deny we're changing history  
 No, we won't stay silent anymore  
 We're mobilizing girls from shore to shore  
     We're out to change the world  
 One obstinate, thick-headed man at a time  
 And we won't stay silent anymore.

*Jane*

Silence is for children  
 We're for human rights  
 We believe we all are equal  
 For these ends we fight  
 We'll roll back our shoulders  
     Let our voices roar  
 We're out to change the world  
 One obstinate, thick-headed man at a time  
 And we won't stay silent anymore

*Man One*

Women are too good for dirty politics

*Women*

We won't stay silent

*Man Two*

You've inferior brains!

*Women*

Darn you, we won't stay silent

*Man Three*

You're ranters and shriekers!

*Man Four*

You'll neglect your families

*Women*

"Let men rule the world," is really what that means!

No, we won't stay silent anymore  
 We're mobilizing girls from shore to shore  
     We're out to change the world  
 One obstinate, thick-headed man at a time  
 And we won't stay silent anymore

*The women stand on soap boxes as they shout their demands.*

**JANE**

We call for an end to the cholera epidemics caused by the unsanitary disposal of human waste!

**GERTIE**

We warn of the terrible forest fires that follow the devastation of our forests.

**CAROLINE**

Endowed by the Creator as rational independent organisms, we demand our rights!

**MARIE CLAIRE**

Women should be able to inherit and own property as they do in Quebec.

*Women*  
 Here is the situation  
 It's women who will save our nation  
 And we won't stay silent anymore

*As the song ends, the refrain continues for a few moments as the crowd disperses and the city street scene dissolves. Joanne is left with Gertie. They have come home.*

### **Scene 7**

*The slow steady sound of a single cylinder diesel boat engine. Frank, Ron, Les and a few others are gathered near the bow on the deck of the company boat as it glides slowly through the waters of Rainy Lake in a late afternoon in the fall. Joanne and Gertie join them. They stand silently and watch the islands and rock palisades slide by.*

#### **RON**

It seems such a shame to log these forests. It is so beautiful here.

#### **LES BEATTY**

That doesn't mean it won't be logged.

#### **FRANK**

Though not today. But it most certainly will. Those are magnificent trees and the Indians are surely not using them.

#### **GERTIE**

Can't we leave something for our children?

#### **LES BEATTY**

We do try to manage it, dear. Preserve some of the natural beauty. *(He glances at Frank.)* Appreciate it the way the Indians do.

#### **GERTIE**

My husband, the Indian agent.

#### **FRANK**

It is the logging itself that gives us the opportunity to be out here on such a beautiful afternoon enjoying all of this.

#### **LES BEATTY**

Indeed. Ironic.

#### **GERTIE**

*(Under her breath to Joanne.)*

Tragic.

**RON**

And you couldn't ask for a lovelier day. I've been so busy. Joanne and I haven't been able to appreciate all of this.

**JOANNE**

*(Under her breath to Gertie.)*

Speak for yourself.

**LES**

It is the same for me. For many of us.

**GERTIE**

*(To Joanne.)*

The lonely life of the camp widow.

**FRANK**

That's why I never married. When a man takes a wife, he takes on a responsibility for her. Why would you bring a woman out here into this lonely man's world?

Look around you. This is God's grandeur. Beautiful and terrifying.

We choose this life. We men. The frontier. It's fast disappearing. Where a man can make his own way and challenge the natural world. I find it thrilling.

**RON**

It's not for everyone.

**FRANK**

No. But is it for you, Ron Laney?

*He lays his hand on Ron's shoulder and Ron is thrilled by it. He looks back into Frank's eyes.*

**RON**

It is. I do believe it is.

*Joanne hears him and shakes her head.*

**FRANK**

Well. Be careful, young man. There are wolves in these woods. It's dangerous out there. There are a hell of a lot of ways a man can die.

*The men laugh. Frank looks out over the water. They stand silent for a few moments, only the sound of the diesel engine thumping quietly away in the background. Frank sneaks a look at Joanne.*

**FRANK**

When I was a boy, I grew up on the cliffs of western Ireland and I roamed wild with the wind and the sea and I knew even then that I would live a lonely life.

**Away, Away: The Cry of Loma Mor**

*(Loon calls over intro)*

Away, away. A haunting twilight call  
As mist hangs o'er the water and the night begins to fall  
A silent pool reflecting fair hills along the shore  
Away, away. O, the cry of loma mor

*The others are surprised and impressed by the quality of Frank's tenor.*

“Away, away,” the sailors called  
As we left the wind swept shore  
O Eire, don't forget thy son  
From thy bosom torn  
Then echoing my lonely heart  
A sad and mournful call  
Away, away. O, the cry of loma mor

*As the others look out over the water, the mist rises from the lake. Frank turns his attention to Joanne and sings directly to her as though serenading. Joanne is enthralled by him.*

Farewell to Eire's rocky cliffs  
To the grassy hill and moor  
Farewell to my sweet colleen  
Left weeping at the shore  
Then echoing my lonely heart  
A sad and mournful call  
Away, away. O, the cry of loma mor

Away, away. A haunting twilight call  
As mist hangs o'er the water and night begins to fall  
A silent pool reflecting fair hills along the shore  
Away, away. O, the cry of loma mor  
*(Loons call)*  
O, the cry of loma mor

*As the music ends, there is just Frank and Joanne. The others have receded in shadow except for Ron who stands at the edge of the light and watches them.*

**Scene 8**

*Frank and Ron fade away and Joanne is left on her own in the darkness. Milly is writing to Joanne.*

**MILLY.**

It's only been a month since you left and already a gentleman caller.

**JOANNE**

I'd hardly call him/ a ...

**MILLY**

Whatever. A secret admirer. Does he have a name?

*Joanne puts her finger to her lips.*

.

**MILLY**

I'm jealous. And still alone. And pregnant. Harvey's last act before he skidaddled was to knock me up it seems.

**JOANNE**

Oh Milly!

**MILLY**

Yes. Oh Milly indeed. Oddly, I'm quite pleased. If nothing else, a child will fill the hours and be some company.

**JOANNE**

*(Smiles to herself.)* A child.

Wouldn't that be lovely?

### **Scene 9**

*Milly fades away and the lights come up on a scene in the forest. A week or so later.*

*Grandmother is kneeling in the woods with a woven basket, busy with some kind of harvesting. Joanne slowly approaches her from behind, stops, and stands quietly watching her. After several seconds of silence, Grandmother speaks without turning to look.*

**GRANDMOTHER**

You are the doctor's wife.

**JOANNE**

Oh! I didn't think you knew I was here.

**GRANDMOTHER**

You're noisy. I heard you.

**JOANNE**

You know who I am.

**GRANDMOTHER**

Everybody knows who you are. You are the doctor's wife.

**JOANNE**

I'm sorry. I didn't mean to disturb you.

**GRANDMOTHER**

You didn't.

What is it you want?

**JOANNE**

Nothing. I just went for a walk in the woods. I don't want anything.

**GRANDMOTHER**

Everybody wants something, Doctor's Wife.

**JOANNE**

Joanne.

**GRANDMOTHER**

Joanne. *(She tastes the word.)*

I'll tell you a story, Joanne.

*(She continues to pick zesab as she speaks.)*

A woman was fasting when a human being appeared to her. When she went to his home, it turned out he was a beaver. That was okay. He was pretty cute for a beaver so she married him. She lived with him a long time. They had four children. Two of them died and two of them lived. One became a beaver. One became a human being. She learned the ways of the beaver pretty good. Then one day her husband died and she returned to her people.

*(She finally turns to look at Joanne. )*

But I learned a lot about white men. White men always want something. The rice, the water, the trees, the earth itself. Always something.

What do you want, Joanne, doctor's wife?

**JOANNE**

I... I want to know what you are doing.

**GRANDMOTHER**

Ahh.

*(She is taken by surprise by Joanne's naive curiosity.)*

I am gathering zesab.

**JOANNE**

It looks like nettles.

**GRANDMOTHER**

Nettles, yes. Zesab.

**JOANNE**

Zesab.

**GRANDMOTHER**

Good.

**JOANNE**

For tea? My grandmother used to drink nettle tea. She said it helped with her gout.

**GRANDMOTHER**

Tea. Yes. Zesab has many uses.

**JOANNE**

Can I help?

*She comes forward and grabs a stalk of nettles and is immediately stung.*

**JOANNE**

Ow!

*Grandmother laughs.*

**GRANDMOTHER**

You need to wear gloves.

**JOANNE**

You're not wearing gloves.

**GRANDMOTHER**

I have been doing it a very long time.

*Grandmother gathers some dock leaves and hands them to Joanne.*

**GRANDMOTHER**

Here. Take some of these leaves. Chew it. Go ahead. Give thanks. Just in your head. You don't have to make a whole song and dance about it.

Okay. Now rub it on your hands.

*Joanne rubs the dock vigorously into her hands. It seems to work.*

**JOANNE**

Oh. What is it?

**GRANDMOTHER**

Your people call it dock. It grows next to zesab so when people get stung, there is a cure nearby. Everything in balance.



**Scene 10**

*In the streets of Gannon, Amelia pulls Mike into view. They quickly look around, then they kiss. Mike is a surprised but willing participant.*

**AMELIA**

*(Breathless.)*

I only have a minute.

*They kiss again.*

**AMELIA**

Maybe five minutes.

*And again.*

**AMELIA**

Oh, Mike.

**MIKE**

Whoa! That was pretty nice!

**AMELIA**

It sure was.

*Someone crosses and they hurriedly hide. Amelia watches them until they are out of sight.*

**AMELIA**

If my aunt ever finds out...

*Mike grabs her shoulders and turns her around.*

**MIKE**

Why do you like me?

**AMELIA**

What?

**MIKE**

Why do you like me?

**AMELIA**

Why wouldn't I like you? You're a really good kisser.

**MIKE**

My neck's all crooked. I'm kinda homely.

**AMELIA**

You're not homely!

**MIKE**

And I'm poor as a church mouse. I send all my paycheck to my mother every week. Ever since we stopped hearing from Dad and I went looking for him/ and ended up here.

*Amelia grabs Mike's face.*

**AMELIA**

For that, Mike. I like you for that.

**Because You're Kind**

*Amelia*

You're kind of nice

Kind of sweet

You kind of sweep me off of my feet

You're kind of shy

And that's my kind of guy

You're big hearted and tender

In your arms I surrender

And you're the one I have in mind

Because you're kind

*(Mike sings, Amelia replies)*

I'm kind of nice (Once or twice)

Kind of sweet (You're a treat)

I'm glad I swept you off of your feet (Must be my balance)

I'm kind of shy (You get by)

*Amelia*

And your my kind of guy

*Mike*

I don't know why but I like it

*Amelia*

You're big hearted and tender

*Mike*

So are you

*Together*

In your arms I surrender

You're the one I have in mind

Because you're kind

*Amelia*

Keeping in mind

You're one-of-a-kind

With a heart of gold

I think you'll find

I am inclined  
To believe in a man who is...  
Kind

*Mike*  
You're big hearted and tender

*Amelia*  
So are you  
*Together*  
In your arms I surrender  
You're the one I have in mind  
Because you're kind

*Amelia*  
Keeping in mind  
You're one-of-a-kind  
With a heart of gold  
I think you'll find  
I am inclined  
To believe in a man who is...  
Kind

*Mike*  
I....  
Love... you  
Heart of gold  
I'm so  
Glad that  
You're  
Kind

*Amelia*  
You're big hearted and tender

*Mike*  
So are you  
*Together*  
In your arms I surrender  
You're the one I have in mind  
Because you're kind

*Amelia*  
You're the one I have in mind  
Because you're kind.  
You're kind.

*Mike swings her into a kiss. Frank surprises them.*

**FRANK**  
Well, look what I found.

**AMELIA**  
/Oh my!

**MIKE**  
/Mr. Gilmore!  
It's not what it looks like.

**FRANK**

Oh, I don't know. Looks pretty nice to me. You're only young once.  
I was looking for you, little lady. Meant to give you this but you ran out of the office in such a hurry.  
*He hands her a large envelope.*  
Could you give this to Mr. Box back in the office in Fort Frances?

**AMELIA**

Yes sir.

**FRANK**

I think you better run along now. You'll miss your train.

*She looks pleadingly at Mike.*

**AMELIA**

But...

**FRANK**

Don't you worry. Your secret is safe with me.  
*(He puts his arm around Mike's shoulders. )*  
Romeo and me, we're just gonna stay here a bit and have a little chat. You go now.

*We hear the train approaching. She runs off.*  
*Frank turns to face Mike.*

**FRANK**

You need to be careful, son. She's here on sufferance. Screwed up at home and her aunt is her last chance before reform school. You understand?

**MIKE**

Yes sir.

**FRANK**

If Mrs. Hines knew what was going on, she'd have a conniption fit.

**MIKE**

Jeez!

**FRANK**

But she won't hear it from me.  
Any progress, lad, in the search for your father?

**MIKE**

No, sir. Not yet.

**FRANK**

Well, I got a man in the office looking into it. You stay positive. Work hard. We'll find him for you.

**MIKE**

Yes sir. Thank you, sir.

**FRANK**

You look cold, son. Why don't you have a proper jacket?

**MIKE**

I can't afford to buy one right now.

**FRANK**

Winter's coming on. Here, you take this.

*Frank takes off his own jacket and hands it to Mike.*

**MIKE**

But this is yours,/ I can't...

**FRANK**

It's not mine. Some idiot left in the bunkhouse at the end of the last season. I'm just putting it to use. You take it. I got two more back in the office. And you watch yourself, hear? She's a sweet girl. Don't mess it up.

**MIKE**

Yes sir.

**FRANK**

And stop by tomorrow. That static is back on the phone line.

**MIKE**

Jeez. I'll be there first thing.

**FRANK**

Good lad.

*They exit in opposite directions.*

### **Scene 11**

*Joanne is feeding the horses. She is wearing pants. She offers a handful of oats through the stable door. Cal enters and looks her up and down.*

**CAL**

Well, look at you. Feeding them horses all on your lonesome. I think maybe you need some looking after.

**JOANNE**

I'm perfectly fine on my own, thank you very much.

*Cal approaches her lasciviously.*

**CAL**

You quite sure, cuz I got some time on my hands and a couple ideas might interest ya.

*Frank enters.*

**FRANK**

What's this?

**CAL**

Oh, I just worried about the lady.

**FRANK**

Well, she's none of your concern. Shouldn't you be on your way out to the cut block?

**CAL**

Yes sir. Just on my way.

*Cal hustles off.*

**JOANNE**

Well, thank you sir. Ever the gentleman.

**FRANK**

Was he bothering you?

**JOANNE**

Nothing I can't handle. I'm getting used to it. Though I must say, I think that Cal is a dirty rotten scoundrel.

**FRANK**

I agree. He is, however, a good logger. I'll make sure he stays out of your hair.

**JOANNE**

Thank you, Frank.

*Pause. They look at each other.*

**JOANNE**

Something on your mind?

**FRANK**

Well, I was looking for you actually. That is, the doctor. Knocked on your door but no one answered. Thought I might find you here.

**JOANNE**

Doctor's away on Wednesday's, Frank. On his rounds of the camps. You set up that schedule yourself, as I recall.

**FRANK**

I did. I'd forgotten.

**JOANNE**

I'm not sure I believe that.

*She smiles.*

I've been warned about you, Frank Gilmore.

**FRANK**

Have you?

**JOANNE**

Indeed. It seems that you are somewhat of a rogue.

**FRANK**

Am I?

**JOANNE**

Apparently so. Not quite as rude as Cal there but still.

And much as I appreciate the attention, I regret I am not in a position to reciprocate.

**FRANK**

Well, what better way to wile away a sunny morning in the fall than to flirt with a lovely young woman.

**JOANNE**

You are an irascible Irishman.

**FRANK**

I am indeed.

**JOANNE**

I think you should be on your way.

**FRANK**

Well, tell the doctor I stopped by. I really do have a few concerns to share with him.

**JOANNE**

I have a few concerns of my own.

**FRANK**

Good afternoon, Mrs. Laney.

**JOANNE**

Good afternoon, Mr. Gilmore.

*Frank turns and walks away. Joanne takes a breath, puts her hand on her heart and watches him the whole way before turning back to the horses.*

## **Scene 12**

*Joanne enters the cabin reading a letter. Milly is sitting at the table. Joanne never looks directly at Milly and, as the scene progresses, it becomes more about confidential conversation rather than letter writing.*

**MILLY**

So. I'm coming to visit!

**JOANNE**

Wonderful! I've missed you.

**MILLY**

If I can get Harvey to agree.

**JOANNE**

He's back?

**MILLY**

I wrote him about the pregnancy, he came home early. It's a step in the right direction. We'll take some days at Christmas and come visit. I'll cajole him.

**JOANNE**

You're good at that.

**MILLY**

What?

**JOANNE**

Cajoling.

**MILLY**

*(Ever the coquette.)*

I am. With this pregnancy, I seem to have gained some small influence on his comings and goings.



**JOANNE**

I wish I had as much with Ron.

**MILLY**

He has abandoned you.

**JOANNE**

More than you know. He has become enthralled with his work. He sees himself as a kind of saviour of the poor and the isolated. He's almost never home and I'm beside myself with loneliness.

**MILLY**

Oh, my dearest, we seem to have traded places. I will be there soon and we will have each other.

*Ron enters and Milly silently watches the conversation. Ron crosses to the door to put on his coat and boots. Winter is coming.*

**RON**

I'm off for rounds at the camps. I'll be two days.

**JOANNE**

Okay. Ron...

*She gets up to say goodbye and he notices her pants for the first time.*

**RON**

What are those?

**JOANNE**

What?

**RON**

Those.

*He points at her pants.*

**JOANNE**

Pants.

**RON**

Why on earth are you wearing pants?

**JOANNE**

Because they are far more practical here than a skirt. Have you seen the mud in the streets?

**RON**

Jo, I don't mind you wearing pants in the house but you can't be wearing pants in the streets.

**JOANNE**

Ron, the whole point of wearing pants IS the street.

**RON**

Women shouldn't be wearing pants in public.

**JOANNE**

Who says?

**RON**

I have to go.

*He finishes tying up his boots and puts on his mittens.*

**JOANNE**

Wait!

**RON**

What?

**JOANNE**

I'm writing Milly.

**RON**

Good. Send my love to my brother.

**JOANNE**

I envy her.

**RON**

Why?

**JOANNE**

Her pregnancy.

**RON**

Jo. We've talked about this.

**JOANNE**

I know but...

**RON**

This is no place to have a child. And I am far too busy here to think about being a proper father. We need to wait. We'll save a little money. We're already on our way. And I'll buy a small family practice in a nice little town and we can settle down.

**JOANNE**

I know.

**RON**

Patience, woman.

**JOANNE**

But at least a child would keep me company on all those long nights you're away.

**RON**

Oh, for heaven's sake!

*He turns and exits. Milly stands behind Joanne's shoulder and together they watch him exit.*

**JOANNE**

Lord give me strength.

**MILLY**

He really is becoming a heartless bastard.

**JOANNE**

These Laney brothers.

**MILLY**

Whatever possessed us.

*They laugh.*

### **Scene 13**

*Milly slips slowly away into the shadows.*

*Joanne puts on her coat and steps out into the forest.*

*She comes into a small clearing dominated by the rising trunk of a magnificent white pine.*

**JOANNE**

Wow. I've never seen a tree this big in my life.

*Spellbound, she reaches out to touch it. She puts her arms out around it. It is much too big for her to reach around.*

There is a spirit here.

*Grandmother has appeared at the edge of the clearing and has been watching Joanne.*

**GRANDMOTHER**

Biisaandago zhingwaak.

**JOANNE**

Oh! It's you. You startled me.

**GRANDMOTHER**

Biisaandago zhingwaak.

*She gestures at the tree.*

**JOANNE**

Pine tree?

**GRANDMOTHER**

Try it. Biisaandago.

**JOANNE**

Biisaandago.

**GRANDMOTHER**

Good. Zhingwaak.

**JOANNE**

Zhingwaak.

**GRANDMOTHER**

Biisaandago zhingwaak.

**JOANNE**

Biisaandago zhingwaak.

**GRANDMOTHER**

This one is the mother.

**JOANNE**

The mother?

**GRANDMOTHER**

Grandmother of the forest. Look around. Do you see any others like her? She is the grandmother.

Do you think, Joanne, doctor's wife, that there will be any pine trees left when all this cutting is done?

*Grandmother turns to the tree and raises her hands in prayer.*

Biisaadago zhingwaak.

We offer thanks for all of your gifts.

*Joanne joins Grandmother in prayer, raises her hands and sings.*

**JOANNE****O White Pine**

O white pine  
 May you ever stand o' noble queen  
 White pine  
 Pointing t'ward eternity  
 Watching over all who live by thee

May you ever stand white pine  
 May you ever stand white pine  
 O----, may you ever stand white pine  
 White pine  
 May you ever stand white pine  
 White pine

*(A chorus joins her for a last refrain.)*  
 May you ever stand white pine  
 May you ever stand white pine  
 O----, may you ever stand white pine  
 White pine  
 May you ever stand white pine  
 White pine

**Scene 14**

*It's Christmas Eve. There are some humble decorations scattered about the cabin. Joanne is getting ready for company. Milly is there watching her work. Again, Joanne never looks directly at Milly and there is no physical contact between them.*

**JOANNE**

The thing is... Frank.

**MILLY**

*(Smiling.)* Your Irishman.

**JOANNE**

Well, not mine but...

He is a man of complex and intriguing gifts. He is both kind and dangerous.

**MILLY**

Dangerous?

**JOANNE**

I don't know how else to put it.

You will meet him at Christmas dinner. Ron insisted on inviting him. He looks up to Frank very much.

**MILLY**

I see he is not the only one.

*Milly retreats as Joanne sets the table. Ron enters from his surgery.*

**RON**

How are we doing?

**JOANNE**

The goose is in the oven, the table is set, and I'm nervous as a mother hen.

Oh, Ron, I just want everything to be perfect. Milly and Harvey will be here on the train soon. They are coming all this way to see us. They'll be our first guests. And it's Christmas Eve. And your boss is coming.

**RON**

Don't you worry about Frank, now. He'll be fine with whatever he gets. He knows about camp life and was just happy to be invited.

**JOANNE**

Still. What time is the train due?

*Ron checks his watch.*

**RON**

Three thirty. Half an hour. Plenty of time. Calm down, Jo. You seem to have things under control.

**JOANNE**

For goodness sake, aren't you even the least bit excited?

**RON**

I've just been so busy with the work here.

**JOANNE**

Well, for one night, can't you just be my husband?

**RON**

For one night. Yes. And one day. Tomorrow is Christmas after all.

*He puts his hands on her shoulders as though to kiss her but, outside, the sound of jingle bells approaching.*

**JOANNE**

What's that? A sleigh. Someone is coming? Are they early? Oh, my goodness! I'm not ready. Why are they early? I was going to go down and meet the train!

**RON**

Relax. It'll all be fine.

*There's an urgent knock at the door.*

**JOANNE**

Ron?

**RON**

Let me get it.

*He crosses to the door and opens it. A stranger stands there, anxious and cold.*

**MR. HANSEN**

Dr. Laney?

**RON**

Yes.

**MR. HANSEN**

I'm Hansen, sir. You gotta come. It's my boy.. He's... You gotta come.

**RON**

Now, now, settle down. Tell me what's going on.

**MR. HANSEN**

The boy. He's been getting sicker and sicker all week. Horrible pains in his stomach. He's stopped eating. I drove up from Windy River. You gotta come.

**RON**

*Hesitantly.*

Yeah.

*He looks back at Joanne. There's a pause then a decision.*

Yes. Come in. I'll get my bag and I'll be right with you.

**JOANNE**

Ron?

**RON**

It's an emergency. I've got to go, Jo.

*He puts on his coat and boots. Grabs his bag and puts a few supplies in it.*

**JOANNE**

But dinner? Christmas?

**RON**

It sounds like appendicitis. I don't think there's time to waste.

**MR. HANSEN**

She said you need to hurry, sir. It's bad. Please.

*To Joanne.*

I'm so sorry about all this, ma'am.

**JOANNE**

Don't be absurd.

**RON**

I don't know how long this will be. If there are complications, I could be most all night. You go ahead with dinner. Give Harvey and Milly my love. Don't let Frank eat all the goose. I'll be a hungry man when I get back.

**JOANNE**

Here. Take some of these biscuits for the ride down. And put your muffler on. It's colder than Winnipeg out there. And that's saying something.

**RON**

I'm so sorry.

**JOANNE**

Go.

**MR. HANSEN**

Thank you, ma'am. For lending me your husband. I'll get him back as soon as I can.

**JOANNE**

You just look after your family, mister. Merry Christmas to you.

**MR. HANSEN**

And you, ma'am.

*And they're out the door. Joanne stands still and listens to the jingle bells fade away into the distance. She turns back to the stove but doesn't quite know what to do.*

*The lights shift as Hansen leads Ron into a crude cabin where he kneels by a boy, obviously sick, who is curled up on a pile of hay and blankets. There's an old shipping crate for a table. Mrs. Hansen hovers over her son. Mr. Hansen tries to hide in the corner.*

**RON**

What's the boy's name?



**MRS. HANSEN**

Arvid.

**RON**

Arvid. I'm Doc Laney. I'm gonna take care of ya.

*He quickly examines the boy.*

How long has he been like this?

**MRS. HANSEN**

A few days. He stopped eatin' yesterday.

**RON**

This boy's in critical condition! This abscess is like to kill him. Why the hell didn't you call me sooner?

**MRS. HANSEN.**

My husband... Will doesn't believe in doctorin'. Been treating him with this.

*He shows the doctor a jar of black dirt.*

**RON**

What the hell is that?

**MR. HANSEN**

Black earth.

**RON**

What?

**MR. HANSEN**

Got it at a revival meetin' stateside.

Told me it'd cure everything.

**RON**

Except stupidity apparently.

*Ron resists an urge to strike Mr. Hansen.*

*As the lights shift back to Joanne in the cabin, the scene continues in silence under the other dialogue.*

*The two men lift the boy up onto a packing crate that serves as a table. Mrs. Hansen comes forward with old flour sacks that she has boiled.*

*Ron prepares for his operation. He drapes the boy's abdomen with the boiled sacks and swabs the area with iodine. He takes a small jar of ether and some gauze from his bag as well as some instruments that he arranges on the table beside the boy.*

*Joanne is still standing at the stove. There is a knock at the door. She startles.*

**JOANNE**

Oh my gosh. Milly.

*She smooths down her hair. Takes of her apron and hangs it over a chair and goes to the door. She takes a breath and opens it, expecting to see Milly and Harvey.*

**JOANNE**

Merry Christmas!

*Crook Neck Mike is outside.*

**MIKE**

And Merry Christmas to you, ma'am.

**JOANNE**

Oh. I was expecting someone else. I'm sorry.

**MIKE**

Sorry?

**JOANNE**

Never mind. Mike?

**MIKE**

Yes ma'am. I happened to be in the telegraph office just now when this telegram came in for you. Fat Charlie asked me to run it over since it was on my way. So... here you go.

**JOANNE**

Thank you. Would you like a cup of coffee or...?

**MIKE**

No, thank you, ma'am. I best be on my way.

**JOANNE**

Oh, meeting someone?

*Mike blusters with embarrassment.*

**JOANNE**

Oh, young man. She's a sweet girl. You say hello to Amelia from me.

**MIKE**

Does everybody know?!

**JOANNE**

Good night, Mike.

*She closes the door and opens the telegram and reads. Milly appears behind Joanne and slowly backs out of the scene as she speaks.*

**MILLY**

My dear Joanne. Stop. Have some pain. Stop. Wanted to be there. Stop. Harvey insists no travel. Stop. Soon. Stop. Your sister. Please stop.

*Milly is gone.*

**JOANNE**

Oh, for crying out loud.

*Joanne drops her head in her hands.*

*Lights shift back to Ron as he places some gauze over the boy's mouth and nose and puts a few drops of the ether on it.*

**RON**

(To Arvid.) Just breath, Arvid. You're going to sleep for a bit and when you wake up you're gonna be OK.

*Arvid quickly sleeps. Ron turns to Mr. Hansen.*

**RON**

You think you can keep this up? A drop or two at a time. Just enough to keep him under.

*Mr. Hansen hesitates.*

**MRS. HANSEN**

I'll do it.

*She steps between the doctor and her husband and takes over the ether while Ron picks up a scalpel.*

**RON**

Everybody ready? This is going to get messy and I'm afraid we're going to be here all night.

(There is no answer.)

Alright then. Let's go.

*He bends over the boy with his scalpel as the lights fade on the scene.*

*Back in the cabin, there is another knock at the door.*

**JOANNE**

What now?

*Still holding the telegram, she crosses to the door and opens it. Frank is standing there with flowers and a small wrapped present.*

**FRANK**

Merry Christmas!

**JOANNE**

Oh my lord! I forgot you were coming.

**FRANK**

I'll endeavour to make more of an impression in the future.

**JOANNE**

I'm sorry. That's not what I meant. Come in from the cold.

*Frank steps in and looks around as Joanne closes the door.*

**FRANK**

Where is everyone?

**JOANNE**

Well. They're not here.

**FRANK**

I can see that.

**JOANNE**

Ron was called away on an emergency. Appendicitis down in Windy River.

*She waves the telegram.*

And my sister and her husband are not coming. She's, ah, well, pregnant.

**FRANK**

Oh.

**JOANNE**

So, I'm afraid Christmas is cancelled.

**FRANK**

Well, that doesn't seem right.

**JOANNE**

No. No it doesn't.

**FRANK**

And something smells wonderful.

**JOANNE**

That's the goose.

**FRANK**

Is it cooked yet?

*Joanne laughs a little.*

**JOANNE**

Yes, I'm afraid my goose is cooked.

**FRANK**

Well, hell, Joanne Laney, these are for you.

*He hands her the flowers.*

They're silk. It being winter and all. Hard to get fresh flowers in Gannon in December.

**JOANNE**

I don't wonder.

**FRANK**

And these are also for you. Well, for everyone, I suppose.

*He hands her the present.*

**JOANNE**

And what is this?

**FRANK**

Open it and find out.

**JOANNE**

I should save it for later. When Ron's back.

**FRANK**

No, no. Open it now. I insist. I think you need some good news.

**JOANNE**

Frank Gilmore. You are a sweet man.

*Joanne turns back to the table and opens the box while Frank watches her, smiling.*

**JOANNE**

Oh my goodness! Chocolates! Where did you get chocolates in the middle of the north woods in the dead of winter?

**FRANK**

Had them sent out on the train from Winnipeg with the flowers. I thought they might make a tasty little treat for after dinner.

**JOANNE**

I don't know what to say. Thank you?

**FRANK**

You're welcome, ma'am.

**JOANNE**

I feel like such a failure. Everything has fallen apart.

**FRANK**

No, no.

**JOANNE**

And I'm so sorry Christmas dinner is cancelled.

**FRANK**

Why?

**JOANNE**

I beg your pardon.

**FRANK**

Why does dinner have to be cancelled?

**JOANNE**

Well, nobody's here.

**FRANK**

I'm here.

**JOANNE**

But my sister didn't come and my husband's off on one of his adventures.

**FRANK**

When will Ron be back?

**JOANNE**

He only left an hour ago. He'll be all night.

**FRANK**

All night?

**JOANNE**

That sometimes happens.

**FRANK**

Were you looking forward to spending Christmas alone?

**JOANNE**

God no.

**FRANK**

Me neither. I got nothing. Nobody. And that goose does smell wonderful. And I would be delighted to keep you company this Christmas Eve, Joanne Laney.

**JOANNE**

I don't know.

*Frank sings.*

**Why Spend Christmas Alone**

Why spend Christmas alone  
 You could invite a charming knight into your home  
 Who cooks a goose for one  
 When you could choose someone  
 Who's absolutely starving  
 To help you with the carving  
 Why spend Christmas alone  
 It's undoubtedly known  
 When the tree is trimmed and dinner is prepared  
 Memories of loved ones, shimmer in the air  
 We find the joy of Christmas, only when its shared  
 Why spend Christmas alone

*Frank*

Why spend Christmas alone  
 You could request a special guest come to your  
 home  
 It gives a soul a lift  
 When you bestow a gift  
 On someone who is longing  
 A sense of true belonging  
 Why spend Christmas alone  
 It's undoubtedly known

When the fire glows, there's cookies to be shared

We find the joy of Christmas, only when its  
 shared

Why spend Christmas alone

*Joanne*

I really think you should go  
 You're a rogue  
 Your Irish brogue is much too charming  
 I see through those eyes so blue  
 And your half-crooked smile is alarming  
 And disarming  
 I really think you should go  
 Even though it's Christmas

Memories of loved ones, shimmer in the air

*Frank*

It takes two to sing harmony

Two, to join hands  
 Two, to come together  
 And it takes two, it takes two to dance

*(Instrumental/Waltz.)*  
*(As they dance, Joanne wrestles with her indecision until finally, she gives herself over to the seduction.)*

*Frank*  
 Why spend Christmas alone

*Joanne*  
 It's undoubtedly known

*Frank*  
 When the day is done and gifts have been compared

*Joanne*  
 Memories of loved ones, shimmer in the air

*Together*  
 We find the joy of Christmas, only when its shared  
 Why spend Christmas alone  
 Why spend Christmas alone

*He kisses her. They step apart. Joanne stares at Frank for a moment. Then she returns to his arms as the lights fade to black.*

**End of Act One.**



## **ACT TWO**

### **Scene 1**

*Morning in the logging camp. Lumberjacks asleep on bunks. Ron is among them. All is quiet except for the snoring of many men. The cook enters silently carrying a large pot and a correspondingly large ladle. He walks to centerstage and bangs on the pot enthusiastically.*

**COOK**

ROLL OUT, JACKS!

*The jacks sit bolt upright.*

**JACK**

JESUS H. CHRIST! DO YOU HAVE TO DO THAT EVERY DAMN MORNING, COOKIE?!

### **The Roll Out Jacks Rag**

*Cook*

Git off a yer bunks  
 You lazy ol' lunks  
 Because it's daylight in the swamp  
 Daylight in the swamp  
 It's daylight in the swamp  
 Git off a yer arse  
 N' git on yer horse  
 Because it's daylight in the swamp  
 Ya SOBs layin' on yer backs  
 It's more than time that ya  
 Roll out Jacks

*As the cook sings, the jacks slowly get out of bed, pull on their clothes. Some stay in bed grumbling. Coughing, wheezing and hacking begins.*

Roll out Jacks, yes roll out  
 Roll out Jacks, jus' roll out  
 Roll out Jacks, mus' roll out  
 Git out a yer beds, out a yer bunks  
 Wakey wake, ya lazy lunks  
 Roll out Jacks, yes roll out  
 Roll out Jacks, jus' roll out (*Jacks grumble*)  
 Ya SOBs don't ya dare talk back  
 It's more than time that ya  
 Roll out Jacks

*Instrumental while Jacks exit the bunk house yawning, scratching their bellies. Hacking coughing gets louder. Some Jacks carry the cots off and replace them with trestle tables and benches. As this happens, other jacks stop to piss into the wings.*

Yezus Marryah! You boys sure squawk!  
 Grub is awaitin'  
 Waitin' on the table  
 C'm on fellas, time ta eat

*Jacks*  
 Grub is awaitin'  
 Waitin' on the table  
 C'm on fellas, time ta eat

*(Jacks move noisily to the tables)*  
 Roll out Jacks, yes roll out  
 Roll out Jacks, jus' roll out  
 Roll out Jacks, mus' roll out  
 The Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost  
 He that eats the fastest gets the most

**FRENCHIE**

Hey, dat my spot!

**CAL**

No, it ain't!

**FRENCHIE**

Dat where I always sit

**CAL**

Yeah, whad'ya gonna do about it?

*Cook*  
 Ya SOBs, this ain't the tower of Babel  
 THERE AIN'T NO TALKING AT THE GODDAMN TABLE

*From dead silence, the noise builds again steadily and rhythmically. Instrumental with choreographed tin cup/plate/spoon rhythms on the table. Various Jacks voice one or two lyrics. ie) "Daylight in the swamp" and "Git off a yer arse". They get up from the table at various times after they wolf down their food. They clear tables as they leave Jack alone playing the rhythm (Could be like a drum solo).*

Ya SOBs, now go get packed  
 It's more than time that cha  
 Roll out Jacks

*(Jacks get ready for the trek ie. Putting on boots. Getting their back packs, axes and saws.)*

Roll out Jacks, yes roll out  
 Roll out Jacks, jus' roll out  
 Roll out Jacks, must roll out  
 Git off a yer arse, git on yer horse  
 Our feets are froze, they're gittin' worse  
 Roll out Jacks, yes roll out  
 Roll out Jacks, jus' roll out

*Cook*  
 Ya SOBs, now I see your backs  
 That's one more day that I  
 Rolled.....  
 I Rolled out the Jacks

*The jacks have dispersed ones and twos, carrying the trestle tables and chairs away with them. In the end the cook is left to strike the last piece of furniture and the stage is clear.*

*Ron is left alone on the stage eating a last delicious biscuit.  
 One jack returns anxiously.*

**WINDY JACK**

Hey, Doc.

*He turns to face downstage and drops his pants, exposing his ass to the doctor.*

**WINDY JACK**

Can you lance this boil on my ass?

*Ron is non-plussed and freezes, the biscuit halfway to his mouth. There is a moment of silence. The jack looks over his shoulder.*

**WINDY JACK**

Maybe later?

**RON**

Maybe later.

*The jack pulls up his trousers and exits.*

**Scene 2**

*The stage is dark. We can hear the wind and approaching footsteps in the snow. Ron enters upstage and starts down. He carries a pack. He is dressed for the deep cold and he struggles against the snow. He is lost. He stops.*

*The pump man appears. He points into the distance.*

**PUMP MAN**

Look. It's dark, it's damn cold, and the wind's blowing. You should probably stay here with me in the pump house. But if you gotta go, you listen to me. That's the light of the camp. There. But don't let that fool ya. The wind picks up the snow and hides that light. You lose track. Pulled a body off the ice a couple of months back. Frozen stiff. Wolves'd been chewing on it.

**RON**

I'm lost. I should have stayed.

*The sound of a wolf howl. Ron startles and turns toward the sound of the wolf.*

**PUMP MAN**

You stick to the trail. Goes right round the lake. It's longer sure but it's safer.

*Another wolf howl. This one from the other side.*

Lose your bearings, you listen for the ice. It moves and cracks. You can hear it in the dark.

*The wolves are getting closer now. Calling and responding from either side. The pump man has disappeared. Ron cries out in panic.*

**RON**

Help! Help! Wolves! Anybody! I don't want to die out here!

*We hear the pump man's voice, like an echo in the distance.*

**PUMP MAN (off)**

Listen for the ice.

*The ice cracks with a great boom. Ron turns quickly and starts in that direction.*

**RON**

Thank god!

Help! For God's sake, help me! I'm out on the ice! Help!

*A light appears upstage. A door way with a lumberjack silhouetted in it.*

**OLY**

Is there somebody out there?

**RON**

Help! Wolves!

**OLY**

This way! Come this way!

**RON**

For God's sake, they're right on my heels!

*The jack raises a shotgun into the air and fires once. A huge blast echoes out across the lake. The sound of the wolves fall away.*

*Ron drops to his knees and drops his pack.*

**RON**

Thank God. Thank God.

### **Scene 3**

*He is in the cabin with Joanne. He begins to remove his winter coat and boots.*

**RON**

I staggered into the bunkhouse like a man saved from the gallows. My legs shaking so hard I could barely stand. I haven't run that hard since I was a boy.

**JOANNE**

You could have been killed.

**RON**

You're right, I could have. But I wasn't and that just stirs the blood, doesn't it?

### **What Have I Done Reprise**

*Ron/Joanne Interjects*

I feel alive; It's an adventure (Ron)

And I survived this grand adventure (I've something to tell you, Ron)

I proved myself (Ron will you listen)

Resourceful and strong

*Ron*

I met the challenge

I have no doubt that

This is right where I belong

*Joanne*

Ron will you listen

Listen

*(Shouted)* Listen to me

*Her shout shuts the music down and Joanne speaks into the ensuing silence. She's mad.*

**JOANNE**

I wonder if I'm ever going to see you again, Ron. I sit here alone and think about all the ways people die out there that you are so happy to tell me about over dinner. What happens to me when you get eaten by wolves because you're too proud to wait in the pump house till morning?

**RON**

I'm not going to die.

**JOANNE**

I married you because you were going to be a small town doctor. A safe quiet life.  
But here you are, living your fantasy adventure!  
Was there even an emergency at the camp when you got there?

**RON**

Well, no, it turned out to be a false alarm. Indigestion but/ it could have been...

**JOANNE**

See?! And meanwhile, here I am alone and pregnant and very possibly widowed at any moment!

**RON**

What?

**JOANNE**

I'm pregnant, Ron. We're going to have a baby.

**RON**

I didn't know.

**JOANNE**

You didn't want to know, did you? I've been trying to tell you for a week but you never had time!  
What would that do to your precious adventure in the wilderness?!

**RON**

For god's sake, Joanne! Give me a minute to digest this!

**JOANNE**

Ooooh...  
*She is so frustrated but she has run out of steam.*  
...poop.

**RON**

How could you be pregnant?

**JOANNE**

The usual way.

**RON**

But we've been careful. We've hardly even...

**JOANNE**

It only takes once, Doctor. Nobody knows that better than you.

*Ron exits into the bedroom leaving Joanne alone.*

**Scene 4**

*Milly appears. Joanne can't see her.*

**MILLY**

You're pregnant?

**JOANNE**

Oh yes.

**MILLY**

I'm thrilled!

*Pause.*

Aren't you thrilled?

**JOANNE**

I don't know, Milly.

**MILLY**

Well, let us make a pact, here and now.

*Milly moves to stand in front of her but Joanne turns away.*

**MILLY**

Pay attention now. We will stand by each other and for each other. Say it.

**JOANNE**

We will stand by each other.

**MILLY**

If our husbands cannot find the time for us, we will spend it together, as sisters, in life and in motherhood.

**JOANNE**

Sisters.

**MILLY**

Your child will be my child

**JOANNE**

Your child will be my child.

**MILLY**

And my child yours.

**JOANNE**

And my child yours.

*Milly reaches toward her.*

**MILLY**

Oh, how I long to see you. We will be together soon.

### **Scene 5**

*Frank is looking at maps spread out on a table in his office. Les Beatty, the Indian agent, enters.*

**LES**

You were looking for me, Frank?

**FRANK**

*(Without turning.)*

We're losing money, Les.

**LES**

How can you be losing money? You've been cutting trees like there's no tomorrow.

**FRANK**

And there might just be no tomorrow.

Come look at this.

*Les moves over beside Frank and they bend over the maps together. Frank runs his hand over part of it.*

**FRANK**

We cut all this.

*(A large portion.)*

And this here part?

*(A small corner.)*

That's what we got left. First few years here, we made out like bandits but the trees are getting smaller and the cost of running the rail lines into the cut blocks is getting bigger and we aren't making money. And if we can't make money, I gotta lay off 1000 men.

**LES**

What are you telling me for?

**FRANK**

We need some big trees. *(He gestures at the map.)* That's where the money is. If we can make it through the next month, we can shut down for the summer and move the operation north and maybe keep the men going.



**LES**

There aren't any big trees left around here.

**FRANK**

Yeah, there are, Les. Right there.

*Frank points to the map. Les is stunned.*

**LES**

You can't cut that. That's Indian land.

**FRANK**

That's why I'm talking to you, Les. You're the Indian agent.

**LES**

It's against the law, Frank. That land was set aside for them.

**FRANK**

The Indians don't use it and those trees are just sitting there waiting for my saws.

**LES**

I can't let you do that.

**FRANK**

A thousand men, Les. I'm gonna have to lay off a thousand men.

*There's a long silence.*

*They look again at the map.*

**FRANK**

There's a lot of big trees here right near the edge of the reserve land. Could keep us going for a few weeks. Now that there could be a survey mistake? Couldn't it? An honest mistake?

**LES**

Sounds like you already made up your mind, Frank.

**FRANK**

You gonna stand in the way of that?

**LES**

Would it make any difference?

**FRANK**

Probably not.

**LES**

A survey mistake?

*Frank waits.*

**LES**

The Indians, they're gonna raise holy hell. They're gonna come to me. They're gonna try and stop you. You're gonna say survey mistake. I'm gonna call in the surveyors. It's gonna go to the Department of Indian Affairs in Ottawa. You're gonna get fined. Gonna have to pay for the logs. Pay the Indians. That's a lot of red tape. Could take months to sort out.

**FRANK**

I just need a few weeks.

**LES**

You'll have that.

**FRANK**

You're a good man, Les Beatty.

**LES**

No. I'm not.

*Frank turns back to his map and Les backs away.*

## **Scene 6**

*Joanne is addressing a women's meeting. Jane, Marie Claire, Caroline and her niece Amelia are there. Gertie hasn't shown up yet.*

**JOANNE**

But the white pine is central to the Indians' very beliefs! And when I walk in the pine forest, I feel some presence. Some peace. It is like a cathedral where I can visit with my God.

**JANE**

Hear, hear.

**JOANNE**

Where I can see what He has created in the trees around me.

**JANE**

Through His works, do we know Him.

**JOANNE**

I don't know how to explain it.

**JANE**

I think you have explained it rather well.

**MARIE CLAIRE**

Mais oui.

**JANE**

We must do more to preserve some of this majesty before it is all gone.

**CAROLINE**

Jane, if you wish to move our leaders, you must make your voice heard. I propose a letter writing campaign. It has been our most successful tool nationally to move hearts and minds.

**Dear Minister**

*intro (underscored)*

**JANE**

Listen. Grab a pen and some paper. I'll give you some ideas to get started. Then you can add your own flourishes to make the letter yours.

**MARIE CLAIRE**

Flourishes! I'd be lucky if my sentences made any sense.

**JANE**

We'll all help you, Marie Claire. Ladies, ready?

*Jane (With operatic fervour)/Women Echo*  
We beseech thee dear Minister (Minister, Minister)

**CAROLINE**

Hold it! I think Jane, that we should instead write, "to the Honorable Minister." It is the correct form of address.

**JANE**

Yes, well, as I said you can add your own... ideas.

*Jane/Women*  
For health and wealth and nation (health and wealth and nation)

*Caroline*  
Save our forests from rapacious waste and total degradation

**JANE**

A bit flowery... but

*Jane*  
Save our forests with all due haste to secure them  
For future generations

**LADIES**

Wait, you're going too fast!/

**MARIE CLAIRE**

How do you spell rapacious?/

**LADIES**

(ad lib) R-A-P-A../audacious haste/future generations.

*Jane (Thinking)*

For hungry saws and axes... with appetites vociferous...  
Greedily consume our forest lands coniferous

**MARIE CLAIRE**

Magnifique!

*Women*

For hungry saws and axes with appetites vociferous  
Greedily consume our forest lands coniferous

*Gertie bursts in, interrupting the singing. She's out of breath.*

**GERTIE**

Ladies! Ladies! You must listen!

**ALL**

Gertie! Are you all right? You are out of breath! What is it? Etc.

**GERTIE**

Please, please. Alright. Alright. I've just heard the most distressing news from Les.

**JOANNE**

What is it?

**GERTIE**

The C & RL is going to cut the last of the old growth pine.

**CAROLINE**

Well, it is the raison d'être through which this community, this company, exists. It's why my husband and I are here. Why all of you are here. We are here to cut the forests.

**GERTIE**

No, you don't understand. They are going to cut the trees on the Indian land. The old grove on the reserve land.

**JOANNE**

The old grove off the trail to camp?

**GERTIE**

Yes.

**JANE**

Oh, my Lord!

**JOANNE**

They can't do that! The Indians need that forest. It is a part of their culture, their very way of life!

**JANE**

Action, ladies. We must take action if we want things to change.

**AMELIA**

Yes, let's have action!

**CAROLINE**

Not you, dear. You are too young.

**JOANNE**

We must try to stop them. Place ourselves between the loggers and the trees they mean to cut. We cannot allow them to cut on Indian land. Not those old trees!

**JANE/MARIE-CLAIRE/GERTIE/AMELIA**

Yes!

**CAROLINE**

Ladies, please, please. The letter writing/ campaign will..

**GERTIE**

The letters will not save these trees next week. We must act here! Now!

**JANE**

Indeed!

**GERTIE**

The company cannot be allowed to break the law. That forest was set aside for the Indians.

**CAROLINE**

Surely, they won't miss a few trees.

**JOANNE**

You have no idea how important those trees are. I had no idea until Grandmother explained it to me.

**CAROLINE**

That crazy old woman?

**JOANNE**

I need to tell her what's happening.

**GERTIE**

Who is with me?

**JOANNE/AMELIA/MARIE-CLAIRE/JANE**

Aye!

*Caroline is horrified.*

**CAROLINE**

I cannot be a party to this.

**GERTIE**

Well, then, you are all talk and no action. We will do it without you.

**CAROLINE**

You must understand! It is my husband's company.

*They all stand against her. After a short pause.*

**CAROLINE**

Come, Amelia. We are leaving.

**AMELIA**

No.

**CAROLINE**

Don't be foolish. Get your coat.

**AMELIA**

I am staying, Aunt Caroline.

**CAROLINE**

That's preposterous. You're just a child.

**AMELIA**

I am a full grown woman. I am staying.

**MARIE**

Vraiment. She is a woman.

**CAROLINE**

She is sixteen, for goodness sake.

**MARIE**

When I was sixteen, I had already had my first child.

**CAROLINE**

You are not helping.

**JOANNE**

We will look after her.

**CAROLINE**

I will not...

Fine. Goodbye. I won't say good luck.

*She turns and exits.*

*The ladies look at one another.*

**JANE**

Well, we will need a sign. A banner of some kind perhaps.

*They huddle together, speaking excitedly.*

**Scene 7**

*Frank is standing on the platform at the Gannon train station. Joanne and Ron enter. They are dressed warmly for winter travel. The train approaches.*

**RON**

Morning Frank.

**FRANK**

Morning, Ron. Joanne.

**RON**

It's crisp out here. What are you doing at the train station?

**FRANK**

Gotta fella coming down from Winnipeg. Wants to have a look at the operation. I was going to ask you the same question.

**RON**

We're off to Fort Frances to see the doctor.

**JOANNE**

We're going to have a baby, Frank.

**FRANK**

Well.

*The train pulls to a stop. There is a great release of steam and then the engine idles steadily through the remainder of the scene.*

**FRANK**

Now, I'm not an expert by any means but you don't look...

**JOANNE**

It's early yet. Barely ten weeks.

**FRANK**

Ahh. Ten weeks.

*He's struck by the timing.*

Well, listen. This is great news. Congratulations!

*A man gets off the train and looks around.*

**FRANK**

I think that's my man.

**RON**

Don't be a stranger. Maybe drop by for dinner on the weekend.

**JOANNE**

We haven't seen much of you since Christmas.

**FRANK**

Will do.

*Crosses to the stranger.*

Mr. Weyerhaeuser!

*Frank takes Weyerhaeuser by the arm and they exit together.*

**RON**

He seems distant.

**JOANNE**

I'm sure it's nothing.

*Ron gazes at Joanne for a moment.*

**RON**

Shall we?

*He boards the train. Joanne pauses. looks after Frank, then follows her husband.*



**Scene 8**

*Milly and Joanne exchange letters. Milly is quite pregnant. Joanne doesn't see her.*

**JOANNE**

The snow's gone early.

**MILLY**

It's almost May, honey.

**JOANNE**

I'm starting to show.

**MILLY**

Let me see.

*Joanne turns sideways and pats her stomach.*

**MILLY**

Maybe. If I squint.

*Milly turns sideways herself. She is very pregnant. Joanne can only imagine.*

**MILLY**

This is what you have coming.

*Joanne laughs sadly.*

**MILLY**

Funnily enough, the bigger I get, the more attentive Harvey becomes. I have to say, it's delightful.

**JOANNE**

I wish Ron would pay a little more attention. I really don't know if he cares about the baby or not.

**MILLY**

He will. You'll see.

**JOANNE**

I hope so. If only he...

**MILLY**

What?

**JOANNE**

If only he would show me.

**Scene 9**

*Three lumberjacks (Cal, Gin Pole and Windy Jack) enter whistling Once More a Lumbering Go. They are on their way to work. Cal stops. His boot lace has come undone.*

**CAL**

Hold this.

*Passes his axe to Gin Pole and bends down to tie his shoe.*

**GIN POLE**

You'll need a bigger axe, numbnuts.

**CAL**

My axe is plenty big enough.

*He holds it suggestively to make his point.*

**GIN POLE**

We're cutting the big trees today.

**WINDY JACK**

Those ain't big trees. You ain't never seen no redwoods.

**GIN POLE**

You ain't neither.

**WINDY JACK**

Have to. Worked out west a couple of years back around the turn of the century and I'll tell you they got trees out there in California so big takes a day and half just to walk around em.

**CAL**

The hell you say.

**WINDY JACK**

You can build a hundred houses out of a single tree.

**GIN POLE**

And I hear they got lumberjacks just as big.

**WINDY JACK**

Sure. Old Paul Bunyan, he worked out there. Only place they got trees big enough for him.

**CAL**

He's a myth of the mind. Ain't no such character.

**WINDY JACK**

Oh there is. My cousin Shorty, he knew Paul. Used to ride around in his coat pocket, keep him company on the trek out to the cut block.

**CAL**

You're full of shit.

**WINDY JACK**

That's what Shorty told me. He said Paul covers seven yards with a single stride. Got boots so big a normal man could sleep in them.

**GIN POLE**

But, god, you wouldn't want to.

**WINDY JACK**

Hell no, you think your feet smell bad.

No, that Paul Bunyan he worked in them big woods in California. These here pines, they's just twigs to him.

**CAL**

Oh hell, just shut your mouth. You're gonna spend all day bullshitting and we ain't gonna make any money.

*Oly and Frenchie enter, passing the others.*

**OLY**

Come on, boys. Let's go cut some trees.

**CAL**

Yeah. Come on.

*The lumberjacks resume whistling and exit.*

**Scene 10**

*The women protestors enter. They carry a big banner.*

**JOANNE**

This is good. This is the only trail into the big grove. We can set up here.

**GERTIE**

Okay. Take this.

*Gertie passes the end of the banner to Jane. They unfold it. It reads, "Save the White Pine!"*

**JANE**

How does it look?

**MARIE CLAIRE**

C'est magnifique!

**JOANNE**

It looks good.

**AMELIA**

Like we mean business.

**GERTIE**

Thank you. We do mean business. I worked on it when Les was away.

**JANE**

Where are the lumberjacks?

**GERTIE**

They're coming. Don't you worry.

*Grandmother has slipped into the shadows at the edge of the grove where she can watch the women.*

**JANE**

I'm not worried. I am a bit nervous though. I wish Caroline was here with us.

**GERTIE**

Yes. She is the only one of us who has some experience with this kind of thing.

**AMELIA**

Aunt Caroline is a hypocrite. She talks a good line but when it comes right down to it, she won't do anything that Uncle Edward doesn't approve of and Uncle Edward sure wouldn't approve of this.

**JANE**

What if they get angry?

**JOANNE**

We'll be fine. You should see them when they come to Ron to get their injuries seen to. They whine like children.

*Off stage we can hear the lumberjacks singing as they approach.*

**JACKS (Off)**

**We'll All A Lumbering/We Won't Stay Silent Anymore Reprise**

Come all ye sons of freedom  
Yes, come and sing our song

Come all ye roving woodsmen  
 Whose working day is long  
 We'll cross the raging rivers  
 Where mighty waters flow  
 The mighty waters flow  
 We'll roam the wild woods over  
 And once more a-lumbering go  
 We'll roam the wild woods over  
 And once more a-lumbering go

*The lumberjacks enter, stop briefly, shocked by the women who stand in their way.*

**OLY**

Look boys! It's a by-god protest!

*We hear the first line of the women's song before the men join. The energy should be of a competition, a battle, back and forth, back and forth, with growing energy and tension.*

*Ladies*

No, we won't stay silent anymore  
 We've found our voice like we never have  
 before  
 Heads held high, we declare our dignity  
 You can't deny we're changing history  
 No, we won't stay silent anymore  
 We're mobilizing girls from shore to shore  
 We're out to change the world  
 One obstinate, thick-headed man at a time  
 And we won't stay silent anymore

*Jacks*

Come all ye sons of freedom  
 Come and sing this song  
 Come all ye roaming woodsmen  
 These women don't belong  
 With hooks and saws and axes  
 We'll make our presence known  
 We'll make our presence known  
 With hooks and saws and axes  
 We will make our presence known

*Music underscores dialogue.*

**CAL**

Very nice ladies. Now get the hell out of the way. We got some work to do.

**GERTIE**

No!

**OLY**

Wad'ya mean no?

**JOANNE**

We mean we're not getting out of the way. These are the last big white pines and we won't let you cut them.

**VARIOUS LADIES** (*overlapping*)

Save the white pine! These are the mothers of the forest. Save them! Save our trees!

**WINDY JACK**

Mothers of the forest! What a load a bull shit.

**JANE** (*singing*)

No. We won't stay silent!

**MARIE CLAIRE**

And we won't get out of the way.

**CAL**

You won't get out of the way. Windy, Oly, Gin Pole. Move 'em

**JOANNE**

Stand your ground ladies!.

*Windy, Oly and Gin Pole hand their axes to the men near them and advance on the women.*

*The music rises in growing discordance.*

*Ladies*  
We say...

*Gertie*  
Conservation is the heart of womanhood!  
WE WON'T STAY SILENT!

*Jane*  
As homemakers, we are nature's housekeepers.  
NO WE WON'T STAY SILENT!

*Gertie*  
Keep your hands to yourself!

*Marie-Claire*  
For our children and for future generations!

AND WE WON'T  
*Jane*  
Stay away from me!

STAY SILENT...  
  
Various women  
Stay away! Let me go! Ouch! You wouldn't dare!

*Oly*  
Let's go, lady!

*He moves to grab Gertie but she hits him with her bag.*

What the hell!

*Gin Pole*  
Get out of our way!

*Gin Pole picks up Marie Claire and physically tries to move her. She slaps him.*

*Gin Pole*  
Ow!  
Now you'll get it!

*Cal*  
Enough.... Boys, get 'em out here!

*The loggers all drop their axes and advance on the ladies*

*Cal*  
They smell good, huh!  
How 'bout a little fun before work, boys? Come on, girlie. You know you want it!

*One grabs Marie Clarie but she kicks him in the nuts.*

Fucking hell! Get 'em boys!

*The scene turns into a free for all. The ladies screaming, the lumberjacks cursing. It is scary, violent and unexpected.*

*The music, now discordant, underscores it all.*

*A commanding voice from off suddenly cuts through the noise.*

**FRANK**  
THAT'S ENOUGH!

*Frank enters. His voice cuts through the music and the violence. He is angry.*

**FRANK**

What the gobshite is going on here?

**CAL**

They tried to keep us from getting to work.

**FRANK**

And that's your excuse for assaulting these women?

**CAL**

But / they...

**FRANK**

/ I don't want to hear a damn thing from you. Not one goddamn thing. You pick up your axe and get to work. Then you can get the hell out of here. You can pick up your check in the office at the end of the day. You're fired.

**CAL**

What?!

**FRANK**

If I ever see you on C & RL property again, I swear to God, I'll beat you so bad you'll wish you'd died. Get!

*Cal is angry but he picks up his axe and leaves.*

**FRANK**

And the rest of you, get the hell to work.

*Nobody moves.*

**FRANK**

NOW!

*They hustle off.*

**JANE**

Thank you, Mr./ Gilmore.

**FRANK**

I think you've done just about enough damage here. And you, Miss Hines, you just wait till your aunt hears about this. You should know better. I suggest you all go home where you belong.

**GERTIE**

We won't stay silent/



**FRANK**  
GO!

*They ladies pick up and exit. Joanne lingers.*

*He turns and looks at Grandmother.*

**FRANK**  
You too, old woman.

*Grandmother approaches him.*

**GRANDMOTHER**  
You can't cut these trees. This is our land. You know this.

**FRANK**  
Go!

**GRANDMOTHER**  
We will be back.

*Grandmother leaves but stops again in the shadows and watches from where she can't be seen.*

**JOANNE**  
We didn't expect things would get out of control like that.

**FRANK**  
What the hell did you expect?

**JOANNE**  
I don't know. We just wanted to save some of the big trees, the mothers, the...

**FRANK**  
Joanne Laney, it's none of your business.

**JOANNE**  
I'm...

*She doesn't finish her thought. She turns and starts to leave.*

**FRANK**  
Wait.

*Joanne stops but doesn't turn around.*

**FRANK**  
The child. Is it mine?

**JOANNE**

Of course not.

*There's a long pause.*

**FRANK**

Go home to your husband.

*Joanne leaves. Frank starts back to the office but changes his mind and heads off after the loggers. Grandmother is the last to exit.*

### **Scene 11**

*Back in Ron and Joanne's cabin. Mid-argument.*

**RON**

You're an intelligent woman. I can't believe I have to say this. I work for them, Joanne. They pay me. That's how we make a living here. You want me to lose my Job?

**JOANNE**

That would certainly make things simpler.

**RON**

It's none of your business what the company cuts.

**JOANNE**

Funny, Frank Gilmore said the same thing.

**RON**

Well, thank god for Frank Gilmore.  
What am I going to do with you?

**JOANNE**

What are you going to do with me?!

**RON**

I can't have you doing this kind of thing.

**JOANNE**

What? Expressing my opinion? Standing up for the things I have come to believe in?

**RON**

Oh, for heaven's sake. I don't know who you are anymore.

**JOANNE**

Maybe that's because you're never here!

*Pause. They catch their breath.*

**RON**

I should have known better. I should never have brought you here.

**JOANNE**

But I'm here now and I've changed, Ron. It's like I'm waking up. I'm not the same woman you married. I'm not even the same woman who came north with you nine months ago.

**JOANNE**

**TOP OF THE WORLD REPRISE**

My husband, truly  
I feel as though you look right through me  
You decide everything  
As if I wasn't there  
Let me try to say it clearly  
I just don't think you hear me  
Can you please notice me?  
Am I just shouting to the air?  
You don't say thank you  
And you leave me alone  
It's not as if you're with me  
Even when you're at home  
You just don't know me  
But can you show me  
I'm still your girl  
I couldn't see this future  
From the top of the world

*They stand facing each other, struck by the reality of their broken marriage.*

**JOANNE**

Maybe I should go home to Daddy's farm for a while. There's a place for me there. And this is no place to have a baby. Milly is due any minute and she will need my help.

**RON**

But what about our marriage?

**JOANNE**

Indeed.

*A silence descends upon them.  
Then, suddenly, we hear the lumberjacks calling from outside.*

**LUMBERJACKS** (Off)

Doc! Doc! We got an emergency here!

*The door to the surgery flies open and Frenchie and Oly burst in carrying the body of Frank.*

**RON**

What's going on? What's happened?

**FRENCHIE**

It's Mr. Gilmore!

**JOANNE**

What!?

**OLY**

Cal felled a tree on him.

**RON**

No!

**FRENCHIE**

He didn't mean to.

**JOANNE**

Frank!

**RON**

Here! Here! Put him up on the table!

*They carry him to the table and lift him up on it. He seems to be unconscious and there is a lot of blood.*

**OLY**

He was behind us. Late getting to the cut block and nobody saw him. We didn't know he was following us. He never comes out there.

**RON**

That's enough! Get out of the way.

*The jacks back away from the table as Ron goes to work over the body.*

**RON**

Oh, Christ.

**JOANNE**

Frank? Frank?

**FRENCHIE**

Nobody knew. We brought him right here. Is he dead?

**RON**

Get out! Let me work!

*The jacks turn and leave in a hurry.*

*Ron is peeling back Frank's shirt.*

**RON**

Jo, get me a clean cloth.

*She does not move.*

**RON**

Jo! A cloth.

*She turns and fetches him a cloth and a bowl of clean water.*

**RON**

Frank. Frank, can you hear me? Are you there?

**FRANK**

*(Feebly.)*

Hey Ron. Good to see ya.

**RON**

Ssh. Does it hurt?

**FRANK**

Not much.

*(He sees Joanne.)*

Hello, Joanne.

**JOANNE**

Hello, Frank.

**FRANK**

You stay away from those lumberjacks, lady. Them sons of bitches are dangerous.

*Joanne catches her breath. Frank chuckles a little. Coughs up some blood.*

**RON**

Ssh. Let me work here.

**FRANK**

There's no point really. We all know how this ends, Doc.  
(*To Joanne.*) But do me a favour, would you?

**JOANNE**

Sure. Anything.

*Frank takes a ragged breath.*

**FRANK**

Hold my hand.  
I'm a little scared. I don't want to be alone.

*Joanne takes one of Frank's hands. Ron continues to work feverishly. They stand on either side of him. Frank smiles and closes his eyes.*

**FRANK**

Thank you.  
(*Pause.*)  
What do you know, I can't feel my legs.

*Joanne gently reaches out and brushes the hair from his face.  
Frank dies.*

**JOANNE**

Ron?

*Ron looks up and realizes too late what has happened. He grabs Frank's other hand desperately.*

**RON**

Frank?! No, Frank! Frank!

*Ron and Joanne look at each other over his body.*

## **Scene 12**

*Music starts, a funeral march, a dirge of **The Cry of Loma Mor Reprise.***

*Several lumberjacks enter the room. They gently move Ron and Joanne away from the table as the walls and furnishings of the doctor's surgery fall away. Leaving Frank's body alone, they build a coffin around him, using the table top as the base of the coffin and methodically attaching the sides and then*

*the top. When it is all in place, Ron joins five others and they lift the coffin to their shoulders and carry it to the train.*

*Joanne is left behind. She tries to follow but something is wrong. She bends over in pain and clutches her stomach. She drops to her knees. We're not sure if it's grief or something else. The pain is so bad that she passes out.*

*The music takes us into blackness and then slowly the light comes back up.*

### **Scene 13**

*The lumberjacks have gathered for a wake: Windy, Oly, Frenchie, and Gin Pole. The mood is somber. Windy sings, slowly and tentatively at first but gathering energy as the song continues.*

#### **The Ballad of Frank Gilmore**

Gather round ye shanty boys  
 The story must be told  
 Of our head push Frank Gilmore  
 Best boss I ever know'd  
 An Irishman and tenor  
 With a voice so clear and fine  
 And sweeter than the thunder  
 Of the falling pine  
*Jacks*  
 Oh, sweeter than the thunder  
 Of the falling pine

Now, Frank could bowl you over  
 With his keen and killer grin  
 He toppled wood and women  
 'Til the Big Wood toppled him  
 Feared neither God nor devil  
 As he neared the timber line  
 And he never heard the thunder  
 Of the falling pine  
*Jacks*  
 Oh, he never heard the thunder  
 Of the falling pine

*Jacks*  
 With cross-cut saws and axes  
 We made the woods resound

And many a tall and stately tree  
 Came crashing to the ground  
*Windy*  
 In the roar of crashing branches  
 We heard a chilling cry  
 And found Frank in the tangled boughs  
 Beneath a fallen pine  
*Jacks*  
 Oh, we found him in the tangled boughs  
 Beneath a fallen pine

*Windy*  
 Now our boss and friend Frank Gilmore  
 And his song so clear and fine  
 Will ever echo in the thunder  
 Of the falling pine  
*Jacks*  
 Oh, will echo in the thunder  
 Of the falling pine

*The end of the song is again plaintive and quiet.  
 The lumberjacks do not leave but the lights on them dim.*

#### **Scene 14**

*Joanne is in bed and Ron is standing beside her.*

**RON**

Welcome back.

**JOANNE**

What happened?

*Joanne tries to sit up.*

**RON**

How are you feeling?

**JOANNE**

A little dizzy. /What

**RON**

/What do you remember?



**JOANNE**

Oh. Frank.

**RON**

Yes.

**JOANNE**

The men, you, carrying the coffin. There was some pain. A lot of pain.

**RON**

I think your symptoms were exacerbated by the grief. You passed out. When you weren't at the train with us, I went back to the cabin and found you there.

**JOANNE**

The baby!

**RON**

Hush. Hush.

**JOANNE**

My baby!

**RON**

Joanne, I'm so sorry.

**JOANNE**

What?!

**RON**

You've had a spontaneous abortion. It's quite common but the baby... The baby is gone.

*Joanne is stunned. As Milly speaks, Ron and the room fade away.*

*Milly appears in the shadows. She is holding a baby.*

**MILLY**

Dearest sister, The baby has come! Oh, what a joy! They wanted me to rest but I had to write you and made them bring me a pen and paper. Look! She is so beautiful. So precious. I will come with her to visit as soon as I can. By the time yours is born my Barbara will be old enough to travel. I long to see you again. To share this miracle with you. Our two babies.

*A man comes with a wheel chair for her. He helps her into it and takes the baby from her.*

I must rest now. I've a bit of a fever. I'm tired and sore but so happy.

Your dear Milly.

*She is wheeled off into the darkness.*

*Joanne is alone.*

**Scene 15**

*The lights rise on the lumberjacks. They're drinking home brew from glass jars. It tastes horrible. There's a somber mood.*

**WINDY**

Woof. This is the stuff Buddy makes from potato peels?

**OLY**

Yeah.

**FRENCHIE**

D'ere shutting her down for da summer. Bout two weeks.

**GIN POLE**

And we're almost through the pine in this area so God knows if there's any work here next season.

**WINDY**

And Frank's gone.

**FRENCHIE**

I only here cuz of Frank, uh.

**OLY**

Yeah.

*Pause.*

*Oly raises a glass.*

**OLY**

Best boss I ever know'd.

*They toast and drink.*

**WINDY**

My cousin Shorty says they're looking for jacks in British Columbia. I might try there.

**OLY**

I thought this was your last season.

**WINDY**

What the hell else am I gonna do? We just logged the last frontier of white pine. The future is out west. With them big firs Shorty talks about.

**FRENCHIE**

Dis stuff? Tastes like piss.

**Scene 16**

*Joanne sits at the table in the cabin. She is despondent. Ron enters. He has a letter.*

**RON**

I've just come from the post office. This was in the mail. I think you'd better read it.

**JOANNE**

Read it to me, Ron.

**RON**

It's from Harvey.

*He takes a breath.*

**RON**

Dear brother, I do not know how to write these words. Milly is gone.

**JOANNE**

No!

**RON**

She passed last night. She was in pain and I could not help her. What does that make me?

*Joanne catches her breath and begins to cry.*

**RON**

Do you want me to stop?

*Ron waits but Joanne does not respond. Eventually he continues to read.*

*Milly appears to Joanne now and she can finally see her.*

**RON**

She lasted nine days. Puerpural sepsis the doctor says.

I cannot care for this baby. I'm not sure I can ever care for her after what has happened.

She has destroyed my whole world.

Somebody will have to, I suppose.

I will see to the funeral arrangements and I will notify you.

Pray for me.

Your brother.

**JOANNE**

Oh Milly.

*Milly is gone.*

**RON**

I...

*He tries to reach out, to comfort her.*

**JOANNE**

Don't. Just... Don't.

*Ron and the cabin fade into the darkness as Joanne begins to sing.*

**Gone/O White Pine Lament**

Oh Milly  
I should have been there  
Maybe I could have helped  
Maybe you'd still be here

I feel lost and numb  
My stomach is churning  
What have I done  
My whole world is burning

You're gone  
Gone  
Gone  
Gone  
You're all gone  
You're gone  
You're gone  
You're gone

Maybe I should have told him  
My baby, I thought I'd hold him

There's a universe between  
What I know and how I feel  
Even though I heard the words  
I can't believe it's real

They're gone  
Gone  
Gone  
Gone  
They're all gone

**Scene 17**

*Joanne finds herself in the grove of ancient trees. It is only stumps now. Grandmother is already there. She slowly turns around to see Joanne.*

**GRANDMOTHER**

When I was little, my grandmother took me out here to this forest and showed me how to find the medicines our people use.

The forest is all one thing. The trees, the medicines, the birds, you, me.

*(She brings her hands together and interlinks her fingers.)*

Like this. White men do not see this. They see only the trees.

*(She holds her hands up, fingers extended and pointing into the air. From there, she turns into her grief.)*

**JOANNE**

They're gone

They're gone

**GRANDMOTHER**

They are gone. The trees, my grandmother's medicines. All gone.

*Pause.*

Grief is like a knife. It cuts the world open. Everything is spilling out.

*She looks at her hands. They are empty.*

*They put their arms around each other and they share their griefs.*

*Perhaps Grandmother sings a lament as the lights fade on them.*

**Scene 18**

*Amelia calls from off.*

**AMELIA**

Mike! Mike!

*She runs on as Mike runs from the opposite direction.*

**MIKE**

Amelia!

*They meet in the middle for an embrace and a big kiss.*

**AMELIA**

Oh my gosh, I've been looking for you everywhere!

**MIKE**

Me too! Listen, listen. I found my father. Well, the guy in the office did. They found an address for him. Out west. Someplace called Hope.

**AMELIA**

That's a good name. You're going, aren't you?

**MIKE**

I have to.

**AMELIA**

Good. I'm coming with you.

**MIKE**

What?!

**AMELIA**

There's nothing for me here. They took my job away from me, my aunt wants to send me back east to some reform school, and I love you.

*She pulls out a wad of crumpled bills from her pocket.*

I have a little money saved. I can pay my own way. Please. Take me with you.

**MIKE**

Oh my god, of course! I was so scared I'd have to leave you behind. How did I get so lucky!

**Because You're Kind Reprise**

*Amelia*

You're kind of nice

*Mike*

Kind of sweet

*Amelia*

You kind of sweep me off of my feet

*Mike*

I'm kind of shy

*Amelia*

And you're my kind of guy

*Mike*

You're big hearted and tender

*Amelia*

So are you

*Mike*

In your arms I surrender

*Amelia*

And I'll leave all of this behind

Because you're kind

*Amelia*  
 Keeping in mind  
 You're one of a kind  
 With a heart of gold  
 I think you'll find  
 I am inclined  
 To believe you're the marrying  
 Kind

*Mike*  
 I....  
 Love.... you  
 Heart of gold  
 I'm so  
 Glad that  
 You're  
 Kind

*Mike*  
 You're big hearted and tender  
*Amelia*  
 So are you  
*Together*  
 In your arms I surrender  
 And I'll leave all of this behind  
 Because you're kind  
 You're the one I have in mind  
 Because you're kind

*Arm and arm, they exit to whatever life holds for them.*

### **Scene 19**

*Joanne and Gertie are sitting at Joanne's dinner table.*

**GERTIE**

You want another slice of fruitcake?

**JOANNE**

No, thank you. I'm still working on this one.

**GERTIE**

Yeah. It's a little dry, isn't it?

**JOANNE**

No, no. It's fine.

**GERTIE**

That's sweet. But it really is.

*She gets up and pours her self some more tea from the stove. She brings the kettle over and tops up Joanne's cup.*

**JOANNE**

Thank you. You know you don't have to stay and take care of me. I'm fine.

**GERTIE**

That's what they all say.

*Joanne smiles wanly and Gertie chuckles. There is a little space while they sip their tea.*

**GERTIE**

When my first husband died...

**JOANNE**

I didn't know you were married before.

**GERTIE**

Oh honey, if I had a dollar for all the things you don't know about me, I'd be rich.

*Joanne dips her fruitcake in her tea.*

**GERTIE**

I had this neighbour. Phyllistine.

**JOANNE**

Phyllistine?

**GERTIE**

Well, that's what we called her. Phyllis. She meant well but you had to use small words.

*Joanne laughs a little.*

**GERTIE**

That's the ticket.

Anyway, when Wilson died she insisted on taking care of me. The day after the funeral, she appeared at my door with a plate of raisin cookies she had baked herself. The thing is Phyllis was a bit nearsighted and salt looks a lot like sugar if you're in a hurry.

*Joanne laughs outright. Gertie sings.*

**You Will Find a Way**

*(Intro underscored)*

**GERTIE**

You are not the first, Joanne Laney, to know this kind of grief.

And you certainly won't be the last.

And although that fact doesn't make it any better or any easier,

It means you're not alone.

It means you're surrounded by all these people.



Hundreds, millions, a great cloud of witnesses, since the beginning of time.  
 Who have found a way, picked up their shattered lives and made their own unique way.  
 And, no, you don't really ever get over the grief. But you do learn to live again a different way.  
 So, I know...

You will find a way  
 A way to face another day  
 Breath-by-breath, tear-by-tear  
 Step-by-step, 'til days become years  
 You will find a way  
 You will find a way

## **Scene 20**

*Joanne is standing and cooking at the stove in the cabin. Ron has entered and stands at the door. He watches her for a moment.*

**RON**

How are you, Jo?

*Joanne does not stop her activities or turn around.*

**JOANNE**

What do you want, Ron?

**RON**

I'm just wondering if you are okay?

**JOANNE**

That's not what I mean. I mean, what do you want? From here, moving forward, what do you want?

**RON**

I just got off the phone with Ed. Doctor Hayes. You know we're old friends from medical school.

**JOANNE**

I remember.

**RON**

He wants to buy a practice in a small town out west. A place called Medicine Hat. He wants me to buy in with him. We have a couple of thousand saved up.

*Joanne stops him.*

**JOANNE**

You can't just continue to make decisions without me.

**RON**

I'm not. I'm asking you. Do you want to do this?

You asked me what I want. I want to start again and I want you to come with me. I want you to be my wife. I love you. I know I've been seduced by the wilderness and I've abandoned you and I am sorry.

**JOANNE**

Things can't be the way they were before, Ron. You know that.

**RON**

I know.

**JOANNE**

It will be hard work.

*She turns around to face him.*

And about Frank/

**RON**

No. Let's look forward.

*There is a pause as they look at one another.*

**JOANNE**

Alright, Ron. Let's look forward.

But I want the baby.

**RON**

What do you mean?

**JOANNE**

I want to adopt Milly's baby. We made a pledge to each other. I want to raise her as our own. Can you do that?

*There's a long pause.*

**RON**

A baby.

This place has changed us both. We have survived so much. I have seen deaths I couldn't have imagined and each one has stripped away some skin, some, some layer of invincibility. But I have saved lives too. And I've been chased by wolves in the dead of night. And I've traveled twenty miles in a blizzard to perform an appendectomy on a shipping crate in a frontier cabin.

So, raise a child? Yes, of course I can do that. I can do that with you.

I'll write my brother.

**JOANNE**

Then yes, I'll come with you.

*Ron*  
 We will find a way  
 A way to face another day  
 Breath-by-breath, tear-by-tear  
 Step-by-step, 'til days become years  
 We will find a way  
 We will find a way

*Ron and Joanne*  
 We will find a way  
 A way to face another day  
 Breath-by-breath, tear-by-tear  
 Step-by-step, 'til days become years  
 We will find a way  
 We will find a way.

*The music continues as underscore through the next scene.*

**Scene 21**

*The train platform where the story started. The train arrives. Harvey disembarks with the baby in his arms. He approaches Joanne. The music subsides into a gentle underscore. They stand apart briefly.*

**JOANNE**  
 Harvey.

**HARVEY**  
 Joanne.

*He passes the baby to her.*

**HARVEY**  
 She's yours.

*Harvey turns and exits unceremoniously. Joanne reads the note pinned to the baby.*

**JOANNE**  
 "Her name is Barbara."

*She looks down at the baby.  
 The song resumes and builds to finale.*

*Joanne to baby Barbara*  
 You're so small, so tiny and helpless  
 And all that hair, so dark and wild  
 Your big grey eyes, just looking out all around  
 There is hope in the eyes of a child

*Ron moves to stand with Joanne.*

*Joanne to Ron*  
 She will be ours, I love her already  
 I was afraid, now I'm beguiled  
 We'll build a home  
 We'll hold her and cherish her  
 There is hope in the eyes of a child

*Ron and Joanne*  
 She will be ours, I love her already  
 I was afraid, now I'm beguiled  
 We'll build a home  
 We'll hold her and cherish her  
 There is hope, in the eyes of a child

*Chorus*  
 You will find a way  
 A way to face another day  
 Breath-by-breath, tear-by-tear  
 Step-by-step, 'til days become years  
 You will find a way  
 You will find a way

*(The orchestra swells. The melody of the last lines of O White Pine, ring out: "May you ever stand white pine, may you ever stand white pine. May you ever stand white pine, white pine.")*

**THE END.**