

INTO THE WOODS

Sondheim & Lapine

Children won't listen.
No matter what you know,
Children refuse
To learn.

Guide them along the way,
Still they won't listen.
Children can only grow
From something you love
To something you lose . . .

*Steward and Cinderella's Father return, followed
by Baker.*

STEPMOTHER (*To Cinderella's Father*): Life was so steady, and now this! When are things going to return to normal?
STEWARD: We must be gone if we're to arrive before nightfall.

BAKER: Where are you going?

LUCINDA: We're off to a hidden kingdom.

STEPMOTHER: Shhh! We can't take everyone.

WITCH: Fools! There is nowhere to hide!

Music fades.

BAKER: You'll never get there. We have to stay here and find our way out of this together.

STEPMOTHER (*Sincere*): Some people are cut out to battle giants, and others are not. I don't have the constitution. And as long as I can be of no help, I'm going to hide. Everything will work out fine in the end.

BAKER: Not always.

Stepfamily and Steward exit.

LITTLE RED RIDINGHOOD: I hope the giant steps on them all.

WIFE: You shouldn't say that!

Witch, who has been quietly standing off to the side, turns around.

WITCH: You were thinking the same thing.

LITTLE RED RIDINGHOOD: This is terrible. We just saw three people die!

WITCH (*Bitter*): Since when are you so squeamish? How many wolves have you carved up?

LITTLE RED RIDINGHOOD: A wolf's not the same.

WITCH: Ask a wolf's mother!

BAKER: Stop it!

WITCH: I suggest we find that boy now and give her what she wants.

LITTLE RED RIDINGHOOD: If we give her the boy, she'll kill him, too.

WITCH: And if we don't, she'll kill half the kingdom!

WIFE: One step at a time. Maybe if he apologizes. Makes amends.

BAKER: Yes! He'll return the stolen goods.

LITTLE RED RIDINGHOOD: Yes!

WIFE: He's really a sweet boy at heart. She'll see that.

WITCH: You people are so blind. It's because of that boy there's a giant in our land. While you continue *talking* about this problem, I'll find that lad, and I'll serve him to the giant for lunch! (*She exits*)

LITTLE RED RIDINGHOOD: Are we going to let her feed the boy to the giant?

WIFE: No!

BAKER: I'll have to find him first.

WIFE: I'll go, too.

BAKER: No! Stay here with the baby.

WIFE: We'll fan out. It will increase our chances of finding him.

BAKER: What if one of us gets lost?

WIFE: We'll count our steps from right here.

Little Red Ridinghood comes over.

No. You stay here with the baby. I do not want you roaming about the woods.

BAKER: You would leave our child with her?

WIFE: Yes. The baby is asleep. He will be safe with the girl.

BAKER: But what if the giant were to return here—?

WIFE: The giant will not harm them. I know.

BAKER: How do you know?

WIFE: I know!

BAKER: But what if—

WIFE: But what if! BUT WHAT IF! Will only a giant's foot stop your arguing! One hundred paces—GO!

INTO THE WOODS

What's wrong, ma'am? May I be of some service?

She turns away from him lest she be recognized.

CINDERELLA: The tree has fallen. Mother's grave, destroyed.

BAKER: Oh, I'm sorry.

CINDERELLA: My wishes have just been crushed.

BAKER: Don't say that.

CINDERELLA: It's true. You wouldn't understand.

BAKER: Well, you can't stay here. There's a giant on the loose.

CINDERELLA: I'm certain the Prince will see to it that the giant is rid from our land.

BAKER: There's been no sign of the Prince. No doubt he's off seducing some young maiden.

CINDERELLA (*Turning to him*): What?

BAKER: I understand that's what Princes do.

CINDERELLA (*Indignant*): Not every Prince!

BAKER: You look just like the Princess—but dirty.

She turns away.

You are the Princess. (He drops to his knees)

CINDERELLA: Please. Get up. Get up! (*He does*) I'm not a Princess here.

BAKER: What are you to do?

CINDERELLA: I must be on my way back to the castle.

BAKER: You haven't heard? We came upon the royal family.

The castle has been set upon by the giant.

CINDERELLA: And the Prince?

BAKER: He was not with them.

Beat; music.

You must come with me. You shall be safe in our company.

Reluctantly, she joins him and they exit; we return to Wife and Cinderella's Prince, who are on the ground, kissing; he pulls away; music stops.

CINDERELLA'S PRINCE: I must leave you.

WIFE (*Flustered*): Why?

CINDERELLA'S PRINCE: The giant.

Music.

Sondheim & Lapine

WIFE: The giant. I had almost forgotten. Will we find each

other in the woods again?

CINDERELLA'S PRINCE:

This was just a moment in the woods.

Our moment,

Shimmering and lovely and sad.

Leave the moment, just be glad

For the moment that we had.

Every moment is of moment

When you're in the woods . . .

Music continues under.

(*Smooth*) Now I must go off to slay a giant. That is what the next moment holds for me. (*He gives her a quick kiss*) I shall not forget you. How brave you are to be alone in the woods. And how alive you've made me feel. (*He exits*)

Wife sits, stunned; music stops.

WIFE: What was that?

Music resumes.

Was that me?

Was that him?

Did a Prince really kiss me?

And kiss me?

And did I kiss him back?

Was it wrong?

Am I mad?

Is that all?

Does he miss me?

Was he suddenly

Getting bored with me?

(*She stands*)

Wake up! Stop dreaming.

Stop prancing about the woods.

It's not beseeching.

What is it about the woods?

(*Firm*)