

Sondheim 102 • Class 3 • Into the Woods (1987) • Act I
Music & Lyrics by Stephen Sondheim • Book by James Lapine

Act I: Once Upon a Time in a Far-Off Kingdom

“Prologue: Into the Woods” [excerpts]

NARRATOR:
Once upon a time—

CINDERELLA:
I wish . . .

NARRATOR:
In a far-off kingdom—

[The NARRATOR proceeds to introduce us to a series of characters on a quest:

- CINDERELLA wants to attend the King’s festival and ball, but her stepmother and stepsisters thwart her.
- JACK (of Beanstalk fame) is forced by his MOTHER to take his beloved cow Milky-White to market because she is no longer giving milk;
- LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD wishes to take pastries to her Granny who lives in the woods;
- The BAKER & his WIFE want a child, but they are under a WITCH’s curse that makes them barren.

These are excerpts from this extended scene.]

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JACK'S MOTHER:
Listen well, son. Milky-White must be taken to market.

JACK:
But, mother, no—he's the best cow—

JACK'S MOTHER:
Was. Was! She’s been dry for a week. We’ve no food nor money and no choice but to sell her while she can still command a price.

JACK: But Milky-White is my best friend in the whole world!

JACK'S MOTHER: Look at her!

There are bugs on her duggs.
There are flies in her eyes.

There's a lump on her rump
Big enough to be a hump!

JACK: But—

JACK'S MOTHER:
Son,
We’ve no time to sit and dither,
While her withers wither with her—
And no one keeps a cow for a friend!

Sometimes I fear you’re touched.

LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD:
Into the woods, it's time to go,
I hate to leave, I have to, though.
Into the woods—it’s time, and so
I must begin my journey.

Into the woods and through the trees
To where I am expected, ma’am,
Into the woods to Grandmother’s house . . .
Into the woods to Grandmother’s house . . .

BAKER'S WIFE: You’re certain of your way?

LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD:
The way is clear,
The light is good,
I have no fear,
Nor no one should.
The woods are just trees,
The trees are just wood.
I sort of hate to ask it,
But do you have a basket?

BAKER: Don’t stray and be late.

WIFE: And save some of those sweets for Granny!

LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD:
Into the woods and down the dell,
The path is straight, I know it well.
Into the woods, and who can tell
What's waiting on the journey?

Into the woods to bring some bread
To Granny who is sick in bed.
Never can tell what lies ahead.
For all that I know, she’s already dead.

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But into the woods,
Into the woods,
Into the woods
To Grandmother's house
And home before dark!

. . .

NARRATOR: Because the baker had lost his mother and father in a baking accident—well, at least that is what he believed—he was eager to have a family of his own, and concerned that all efforts until now had failed.

[A knock on the Baker's door]

BAKER: Who might that be?

BAKER'S WIFE: We have sold our last loaf of bread . . .

BAKER: It's the witch from next door.

WIFE, BAKER: We have no bread.

WITCH: Of course you have no bread!

BAKER: What do you wish?

WITCH: It's not what I wish. It's what *you* wish. *[Points to WIFE's belly]* Nothing cooking in there now, is there?

NARRATOR:

The old enchantress went on to tell the couple that she had placed a spell on their house.

BAKER: What spell?

WITCH: *[spoken]* In the past . . . your mother was with child and she had developed an unusual appetite. She took one look at my beautiful garden and told your father that what she wanted more than anything in the world was

[sings—or rather raps]:

Greens, greens and nothing but greens:
Parsley, peppers, cabbages and celery,
Asparagus and watercress and
Fiddleferns and lettuce—!
He said, "All right,"
But it wasn't, quite,
'Cause I caught him in the autumn
In my garden one night!
He was robbing me,
Raping me,
Rooting through my rutabaga,
Raiding my arugula and

Ripping up my rampion
(My champion! My favorite!)—
I should have laid a spell on him
Right there,
Could have changed him into stone
Or a dog or a chair
Or a sn—
But I let him have the rampion—
I'd lots to spare.
In return, however,
I said, "Fair is fair:
You can let me have the baby
That your wife will bear.

And we'll call it square."

BAKER: I had a brother?

WITCH: No. But you had a sister.

NARRATOR: But the witch refused to tell him anymore of his sister. Not even that her name was Rapunzel. She went on:

WITCH:

I thought I had been more than reasonable, and that all might live happily ever after. But how was I to know what your father had also hidden in his pocket?! You see, what I had inherited that garden, my mother had warned me I would be punished if I ever were to lose any of the

Beans.

BAKER & WIFE: Beans?

WITCH: The special beans!

I let him go,
I didn't know
He'd stolen my beans!
I was watching him crawl,
Back over the wall,
And then bang! Crash!
And the lightning flash!
And—well, that's another story,
Never mind.

Anyway, at last
The big day came
And I made my claim.
"Oh, don't take away the baby,"

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They shrieked and screeched,
But I did, and I hid her
Where she'll never be reached.

And your father cried,
And your mother died,
When for extra measure—
I admit it was a pleasure—
I said, "Sorry,
I'm still not mollified."

And I laid little spell on them—
You, too, son—
That your family tree
Would always be a barren one . . .

So there's no more fuss
And there's no more scenes
And my garden thrives—
You should see my nectarines!
But I'm telling you the same
I tell Kings and Queens:
Don't ever never ever
Mess around with my greens!

Especially the beans.

[The scene shifts to Jack]

JACK'S MOTHER:
Now listen to me, Jack. Lead Milky-White to
market and fetch the best price you can.
Take no less than five pounds. Are you
listening to me?

JACK: Yes.

JACK'S MOTHER: Now how much are you
to ask?

JACK: No more than five pounds.

JACK'S MOTHER: Less! Than five.

Jack Jack Jack,
Head in a sack,
The house is getting colder,
This is not the time for dreaming.

Chimney stack
Starting to crack,
The mice are getting bolder,
The floor's gone slack.

Your mother's getting older,
Your father's not back,
And you can't just sit here dreaming pretty
dreams.

To wish and wait
From day to day
Will never keep
The wolves away.

So into the woods, the time is now.
We have to live, I don't care how.
Into the woods to sell the cow,
You must begin the journey.

Straight to the woods and don't delay,
We have to face
The marketplace.
Into the woods to journey's end—

JACK: Into the woods to sell a friend—

NARRATOR:
Meanwhile, the Witch, for purposes of her
own, explained how the Baker might lift the
spell:

WITCH:
You wish to have the curse reversed?
I'll need a certain potion first.
Go to the woods and bring me back
One: the cow as white as milk,
Two: the cape as red as blood,
Three: the hair as yellow as corn,
Four: the slipper as pure as gold.

Bring me these before the chime
Of midnight, in three day's time,
And you shall have, I guarantee,
A child as perfect as child can be.

Go to the wood!

. . .

[Characters spring into action.]

CINDERELLA, JACK, JACK'S MOTHER,
BAKER, WIFE:
Into the woods without regret,
The choice is made, the task is set.
Into the woods, but not forget-
ting why I'm (you're) on the journey.

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*{Little Red Riding Hood comes skipping by
and joins in}*

Into the woods to get my (our) wish,
I don't care how,
The time is now.

JACK'S MOTHER:
Into the woods to sell the cow—

JACK:
Into the woods to get the money—

BAKER'S WIFE:
Into the woods to lift the spell—

BAKER:
To make the potion—

CINDERELLA:
To go to the Festival—

LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD:
Into the woods to Grandmother's house . . .
Into the woods to Grandmother's house . . .

ALL:
The way is clear,
The light is good,
I have no fear,
No no one should.
The woods are just trees,
The trees are just wood.
No need to be afraid there—

CINDERELLA & BAKER:
There's something in the glade there . . .

ALL:
Into the woods without delay,
But careful not to lose the way.
Into the woods, who knows what may
Be lurking on the journey?

Into the woods to get the thing
That makes it worth the journeying.
Into the woods—

STEPMOTHER, STEPSISTERS:
To see the King—

JACK, JACK'S MOTHER:
To sell the cow—

BAKER, BAKER'S WIFE:
To make the potion—

ALL:
To see—
To sell—
To get—
To bring—
To make—
To lift—
To go to the Festival—!

Into the woods!
Into the woods!
Into the woods,
Then out of the woods,
And home before dark!

“Hello, Little Girl”

WOLF [watching Little Red skip away]:
Look at that flesh,
Pink and plump.
Hello, little girl . . .
Tender and fresh,
Not one lump.
Hello, little girl . . .
This one's especially lush,
Delicious . . .
Mmmh . . .

Hello, little girl,
What's your rush?
You're missing all the flowers.
The sun won't set for hours,
Take your time.

LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD:
Mother said,
“Straight ahead,”
Not to delay
Or be misled.

WOLF:
But slow, little girl,
Hark! And hush—
The birds are singing sweetly.
You'll miss the birds completely,
You're traveling so fleetly.

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[to himself]

Grandmother first,
Then Miss Plump . . .
What a delectable couple.
Utter perfection:
One brittle, one supple—
One moment, my dear—

LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD:

Mother said,
“Come what may,
Follow the path
And never stray.”

WOLF:

Just so, little girl—
Any path.
So many worth exploring.
Just one would be so boring.
And look what you're ignoring . . .

[to himself]

Think of those crisp,
Aging bones,
Then something fresh on the palate.
Think of that scrumptious carnality
Twice in one day . . .
There's no possible way
To describe what you feel
When you're talking to your meal!

LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD:

Mother said
Not to stray.
Still, I suppose,
A small delay—
Granny might like
A fresh bouquet . . .

Goodbye, Mr. Wolf.

WOLF:

Goodbye, little girl.
And hello . . .

“Maybe They're Magic”

[dialogue]

BAKER: Magic beans!

BAKER'S WIFE: No one would have given
him more for this creature.

BAKER: Are we to dispel this curse through
deceit?

BAKER'S WIFE [sings]:

If you know
What you want,
Then you go
And you find it
And you get it—

BAKER [pointing off]: Home.

BAKER'S WIFE: Do we want a child or not?

—And you give
And you take
And you bid
And you bargain,
Or you live
To regret it.

BAKER: Will you please go home?

BAKER'S WIFE:

There are rights and wrongs
And in-betweens,
No one waits
When fortune intervenes.
And maybe they're really magic,
Who knows?

Why you do
What you do,
That's the point,
All the rest of it
Is chatter.

BAKER: [*Referring to Milky-White*]: Look at
her. She's crying.

BAKER'S WIFE:

If the thing you do
Is pure in intent,
If it's meant,
And it's just a little bent,
Does it matter?

BAKER: Yes.

BAKER'S WIFE:

No, what matters
Is that everyone tells tiny lies.
What's important, really is, the size.

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Only three more tries
And we'll have our prize.
When the end's in sight,
You'll realize:
If the end is right,
It justifies
The beans!

"I Know Things Now"

LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD:
Mother said,
"Straight ahead,"
Not to delay
or be misled.
I should have heeded
Her advice . . .
But he seemed so nice.

And he showed me things,
Many beautiful things,
That I hadn't thought to explore.
They were off my path,
So I never had dared.
I had been so careful,
I never had cared.
And he made me feel excited—
Well, excited and scared.

When he said, "Come in!"
With that sickening grin,
How could I know what was in store?
Once his teeth were bared,
Though, I really got scared—
Well, excited and scared.

But he drew me close
And he swallowed me down,
Down a dark, slimy path
Where lie secrets that I never want to know,
And when everything familiar
Seemed to disappear forever,
At the end of the path
Was Granny once again.

So we wait in the dark
Until you sets us free,
And we're brought into the light,
And we're back at the start.

And I know things now,
Many valuable things,
That I hadn't known before:

Do not put your faith
In a cape and a hood,
They will not protect you
The way that they should.
And take extra care with strangers—
Even flowers have their dangers.
And though scary is exciting,
Nice is different than good.

Now I know:
Don't be scared.
Granny is right,
Just be prepared.
Isn't it nice to know a lot?

And a little bit not . . .

"Giants in the Sky"

JACK:
There are giants in the sky!
There are big tall terrible giants in the sky!

When you're way up high and you look
below
At the world you left and the things you
know,
Little more than a glance is enough to show
You just how small you are.

When you're way up high and you're on your
own
In a world like none that you've ever known,
Where the sky is lead and the earth is stone,

You're free, to do
Whatever pleases you,
Exploring things you'd never dare
'Cause you don't care,
When suddenly there's

A big tall terrible giant at the door,
A big tall terrible lady giant sweeping the
floor.

And she gives you food
And she gives you rest,
And she draws you close
To her giant breast,
And you know things now that you never
knew before,
Not till the sky.

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Only just when you've made a friend and all,
And you know she's big but you don't feel
small,
Someone bigger than her comes along the
hall
To swallow you for lunch.

And your heart is lead and your stomach
stone
And you're really scared being all alone,
And it's then that you miss all the things
you've known
And the world you've left and the little you
own.

The fun is done.
You steal what you can and run!
And you scramble down
And you look below,
And the world you know
Begins to grow:

The roof, the house, and your mother at the
door.
The roof, the house, and the world you never
thought to explore.
And you think of all of the things you've
seen,
And you wish that you could live in between,
And you're back again,
Only different than before,
After the sky.

There are giants in the sky!
There are big tall terrible awesome scary
Wonderful giants in the sky!

“Agony”

CINDERELLA'S PRINCE (CP):
Did I abuse her
Or show her disdain?
Why does she run from me?
If I should lose her,
How shall I regain
The heart she has won from me?

Agony—!
Beyond power of speech,
When the one thing you want
Is the only thing out of your reach.

RAPUNZEL'S PRINCE (RP):
High in her tower,
She sits by the hour,
Maintaining her hair.
Blithe and becoming,
And frequently humming
A light-hearted air:
Ah-ah-ah-ah-ah-ah—

Agony—!
Far more painful than yours,
When you know she would go with you,
If there only were doors.

BOTH:
Agony!
Oh, the torture they teach!

RP: What's as intriguing—

CP: Or half so fatiguing—

BOTH: As what's out of reach?

CP:
Am I not sensitive, clever,
Well-mannered, considerate,
Passionate, charming,
As kind as I'm handsome,
And heir to a throne?

RP:
You are everything maidens could wish for!

CP: Then why no—?

RP: Do I know?

CP: The girl must be mad.

RP:
You know nothing of madness
'Til you're climbing her hair
And you see her up there
As you're nearing her,
All the while hearing her
“Ah-ah-ah-ah-ah-ah-ah—”

BOTH: Agony!

CP: Misery!

RP: Woe!

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BOTH: Though it's different for each.

CP: Always ten steps behind—

RP: Always ten steps below—

BOTH:
And she's just out of reach
Agony
That can cut like a knife!

I must have her to wife

“Stay with Me”

WITCH:
What did I clearly say?
Children must listen.

RAPUNZEL: No, no, please!

WITCH:
What were you not to do?
Children must see—

RAPUNZEL: No!

WITCH: And learn.

Why could you not obey?
Children should listen.
What have I been to you?
What would you have me be,
Handsome like a Prince?

Ah, but I am old.
I am ugly.
I embarrass you.
You are ashamed of me.

RAPUNZEL: No!

WITCH:
You are ashamed.
You don't understand.

WITCH:
Don't you know what's out there in the
world?
Someone has to shield you from the world.
Stay with me.

Princes wait there in the world, it's true.

Princes, yes, but wolves and humans, too.
Stay at home.
I am home.

Who out there could love you more than I?
What out there that I cannot supply?
Stay with me.

Stay with me,
The world is dark and wild.
Stay a child while you can be a child.

With me.

“On the Steps of the Palace”

CINDERELLA:
He's a very smart prince.
He's a prince who prepares.
Knowing this time I'd run from him,
He spread pitch on the stairs.
I was caught unawares.
And I thought: Well, he cares—
This is more than just malice.
Better stop and take stock
While you're standing here stuck
On the steps of the palace.

You think, what do you want?
You think, make a decision.
Why not stay and be caught?
You think, well, it's a thought,
What would be his response?
But then what if he knew
Who you were when you know
That you're not what he thinks
That he wants?

And then what if you are
What a prince would envision?
Although how can you know
Who you are till you know
What you want, which you don't?
So then which do you pick:
Where you're safe, out of sight,
And yourself, but where everything's wrong?
Or where everything's right
And you know that you'll never belong?

And whichever you pick,
Do it quick,
'Cause you're starting to stick
To the steps of the palace.

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It's your first big decision,
The choice isn't easy to make.
To arrive at a ball
Is exciting and all—
Once you're there, though, it's scary.

And it's fun to deceive
When you know you can leave,
But you have to be wary.

There's a lot that's at stake,
But you've stalled long enough,
'Cause you're still standing stuck
In the stuff on the steps . . .

Better run along home
And avoid the collision.
Even though they don't care,
You'll be better off there
Where there's nothing to choose,
So there's nothing to lose.
So you pry up your shoes.

Then from out of the blue,
And without any guide,
You know what your decision is,
Which is not to decide.
You'll leave him a clue:
For example, a shoe.
And then see what he'll do.

Now it's he and not you
Who is stuck with a shoe,
In a stew,
In the goo,
And you've learned something, too,
Something you never knew,
On the steps of the palace!

“Ever After”

NARRATOR:
And it came to pass, all that seemed wrong
was now right, the kingdom was filled with
joy, and those who deserved to were certain
to live a long and happy life ever after . . .

ALL: Ever after!

NARRATOR:
Journey over, all is mended,
And it's not just for today,
But tomorrow, and extended

Ever after!

ALL: Ever after!

NARRATOR:
All the curses have been ended,
The reverses wiped away.
All is tenderness and laughter
For forever
After!

ALL:
Happy now and happy hence
And happy ever after!

NARRATOR: There were dangers—

ALL: We were frightened—

NARRATOR: And confusions—

ALL: But we hid it—

NARRATOR:
And the paths would often swerve.

ALL: We did not.

NARRATOR: There were constant—

ALL: It's amazing—

NARRATOR: Disillusions—

ALL: That we did it.

NARRATOR: But they never lost their nerve.

ALL: Not a lot.

NARRATOR & ALL:
And they (we) reached the right conclusions,
And they (we) got what they (we) deserve!

ALL:
Not a sigh and not a sorrow,
Tenderness and laughter.
Joy today and bliss tomorrow,
And forever after!

FLORINDA: I was greedy.

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LUCINDA: I was vain.

FLORINDA: I was haughty.

LUCINDA: I was smug.

BOTH: We were happy.

LUCINDA: It was fun.

FLORINDA: But we were blind.

BOTH:

Then we went into the woods
To get our wish,
And now we're really blind.

WITCH:

I was perfect.
I had everything but beauty.
I had power,
And a daughter like a flower,
In a tower.
Then I went into the woods
To get my wish,
And now I'm ordinary.
Lost my power and my flower.

FLORINDA & LUCINDA: We're unworthy.

FLORINDA, LUCINDA, WITCH:
We're (I'm) unhappy now, unhappy hence,
As well as ever after.
Had we used our common sense,
Been worthy of our discontents—

ALL:

To be happy, and forever,
You must see your wish come true.
Don't be careful, don't be clever.
When you see your wish, pursue.
It's a dangerous endeavor,
But the only thing to do—

Though it's fearful,
Though it's deep, though it's dark,
And though you may lose the path,
Though you may encounter wolves,
You mustn't stop,
You mustn't swerve,
You mustn't ponder,
You have to act!
When you know your wish,

If you want your wish,
You can have your wish—
No, to get your wish
You go into the woods,
Where nothing's clear,
Where witches, ghosts
And wolves appear.
Into the woods
And through the fear,
You have to take the journey.

Into the woods
And down the dell,
In vain, perhaps,
But who can tell?
Into the woods to lift the spell.
Into the woods to lose the longing.
Into the woods to have the child,
To wed the prince,
To get the money,
To save the house,
To kill the Wolf,
To find the father,
To conquer the Kingdom,
To have, to wed,
To get, to save,
To kill, to keep,
To go to the Festival!

Into the woods,
Into the woods,
Into the woods,
Then out of the woods—

NARRATOR: To be continued . . .

ALL: —And happy ever after!