Act One, Scene 3

(BAKER sleeps under a tree. music; JACK appears suddenly from the trees, carrying an oversized money sack)

Jack (softly, but intense): 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 'TIL THE SKY.

   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 YOU HEART IS LEAD
   AND YOU STOMACH STONE
   AND YOU'RE REALLY SCARED
   BEING ALL ALONE.
   AND IT'S THEN THAT YOU LONG
   FOR THE THINGS YOU'VE KNOWN
   AND THE WORLD YOU 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!

(BAKER stirs; JACK bounds over to him)

Jack: Good fortune! Good fortune, sir! Look what I have! Here's five gold pieces.

Baker (astounded): Five gold pieces! (He examines the gold)

Jack: I had more, but Mother made me surrender them. She allowed me these five to do with as I pleased.

Baker: Oh, my;

Jack: (looking around) Where is Milky-White?

Baker: Milky-White is back home with my wife.

Jack: Let's go find them. (JACK starts to leave)

Baker: Wait!
(BAKER returns money to JACK)
I don't know that I wish to sell;

Jack: But you said I might buy her back.

Baker: I know, but I'm not certain that five gold pieces would--

Jack: Are you saying that you wish more money?

Baker: More money is always--

Jack: (hands him gold) Keep this. I will go fetch more.

Baker: Wait. I didn't say--
(JACK exits; BAKER looks at money)
Five gold pieces! With this money I could buy baking supplies for a year. I could buy a new thatched roof and a new chimney.

(MYSTEROUS MAN appears from nowhere)

Mysterious Man: But could you buy yourself a child?

Baker: (startled) Who are you?
Mysterious Man: When first I appear I seem delirious, but when explained I am nothing serious. Would you buy yourself a child?

Baker: I don’t understand.

Mysterious Man: How badly do you want a child? Five gold pieces? Ten? Twenty?

Baker: I’ve not thought to put a price on it.

Mysterious Man: Exactly.
(He walks over and takes the gold away)
You’ve not thought about many things, have you, son?

Baker: Give me back the money. It’s not yours--

Mysterious Man: Nor is it Jack’s. The money is not what’s important. What’s important is that your wish be honored.

(MYSTEROUS MAN goes around a tree and disappears; BAKER begins darting around looking for him)

Baker: Come back here! Damn! Give me back--
(He sees BAKER’S WIFE who comes from around another tree)
What are you doing here now?

Baker’s Wife: (quickly switching gears) I see you’ve the red cape.

Baker: Yes. I’ve the cape. Only two items left to locate.

Baker’s Wife: Three.

Baker: Two. I’ve the cape and the cow.

Baker’s Wife: You’ve the cape!

Baker: What have you done with the cow?

Baker’s Wife: She ran away, I never reached home. I’ve been looking for her all night.

Baker: I should have known better than to have entrusted her to you.

Baker’s Wife: She might just as easily have run from you!

Baker: But she didn’t.

Baker’s Wife: But she might have!

Baker: BUT SHE DIDN’T!!

(WITCH drops from tree)

Witch: WHO CARES! THE COW IS GONE! GET IT BACK! GET IT BACK!!

(all three settle down)

Baker: (walks over to her) We were just going to do that. Here, I can give you this--

Witch: DON’T GIVE ME THAT, FOOL! I don’t want to touch that. Have you no sense?
(hears RAPUNZEL in the background)
My sweetness calls. (tough) By tomorrow midnight—deliver the items or you’ll wish you never thought to have a child!

(WITCH puts a spell on them, they double over in pain as WITCH leaves)
Baker: I don’t like that woman.

Baker’s Wife: (contrite) I’m sorry I lost the cow.

Baker: I shouldn’t have yelled. (beat) Now please, go back to the village.
(BAKER’S WIFE annoyed, turns her back and begins to walk away)
I will make things right! And then we can just go about our life. No more hunting about in the woods for strange objects. No more witches and dim-witted boys and hungry little girls.
(SHE begins to move back towards him)
Go!

(THEY exit in opposite directions -- TWO FANFARES -- another part of the forest. CINDERELLA’S PRINCE, somewhat bedraggled, crosses the stage. He is met by RAPUNZEL’S PRINCE)

Rapunzel’s Prince: Ah, there you are, good brother. Father and I had wondered where you had gone.

Cinderella’s Prince: I have been looking all night for her.

(BAKER’S WIFE appears behind a tree and eavesdrops)

Rapunzel’s Prince: Her?

Cinderella’s Prince: The beautiful one I danced the evening with.

Rapunzel’s Prince: Where did she go?

Cinderella’s Prince: Disappeared, like the fine morning mist.

Rapunzel’s Prince: She was lovely.

Cinderella’s Prince: The loveliest.

Rapunzel’s Prince: I am not certain of that! I must confess, I too have found a lovely maiden. She lives here in the woods.

Cinderella’s Prince: The woods?

Rapunzel’s Prince: Yes. In the top of a tall tower that has no door or stairs.

Cinderella’s Prince: Where?

Rapunzel’s Prince: Two leagues from here, due east just beyond the mossy knoll.

Cinderella’s Prince: And how do you manage a visit?

Rapunzel’s Prince: I stand beneath her tower and say “Rapunzel, Rapunzel, let down your hair to me.” And she lowers the longest, most beautiful head of hair - yellow as corn - which I climb to her.

(BAKER’S WIFE reacts)

Cinderella’s Prince: (starts laughing hysterically) Rapunzel, Rapunzel! What kind of name is that? You jest! I have never heard of such a thing.

Rapunzel’s Prince: (defensive) I speak the truth. She is as true as your maiden. A maiden running from a prince? None would run from us.

Cinderella’s Prince: (sober) Yet one has.

DID I ABUSE HER
OR SHOW HER DISDAIN?
WHY DOES SHE RUN FROM ME?
IF I SHOULD loose 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: HIGH IN HER TOWER
SHE SITS BY THE HOUR
MAINTAINING HER HAIR
BLITHE AND BECOMING,
AND FREQUENTLY HUMMING
A LIGHTHEARTED AIR:
(hums RAPUNZEL's theme)
AH-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.

Cinderella's Prince, Rapunzel's Prince: AGONY!
OH, THE TORTURE THEY TEACH!

Rapunzel's Prince: WHAT'S AS INTRIGUING...

Cinderella's Prince: OR HALF SO FATIGUING...

Cinderella's Prince, Rapunzel's Prince: AS WHAT'S OUT OF REACH?

Cinderella's Prince: AM I NOT SENSITIVE, CLEVER,
WELL-MANNERED, CONSIDERATE,
PASSIONATE, CHARMING
AS KIND AS I'M HANDSOME,
AND HEIR TO A THRONE?

Rapunzel's Prince: YOU ARE EVERYTHING MAIDENS COULD WISH FOR!

Cinderella's Prince: THEN WHY NO...

Rapunzel's Prince: DO I KNOW?

Cinderella's Prince: THE GIRL MUST BE MAD!

Rapunzel's Prince: YOU KNOW NOTHING OF MADNESS
'til you're climbing her hair
And you see her up there
And you're nearing her
All the while hearing her
AH-AH-AH-AH-AH-AH-

Cinderella's Prince, Rapunzel's Prince: AGONY

Cinderella's Prince: MISERY!

Rapunzel's Prince: WOE!
Cinderella’s Prince. Rapunzel’s Prince: Though it’s different for each.

Cinderella’s Prince: Always ten steps behind...

Rapunzel’s Prince: Always ten feet below

Cinderella’s Prince: And she’s just out of reach
     Agony
     That can cut like a knife!
     I must have her to wife.

(they exit)

Baker’s Wife: Two princes, each more handsome than the other.
(begins to follow the princes; she stops)
No! Get the hair

(Jack’s Mother enters)

Jack’s Mother: Excuse me, young woman. Have you encountered a boy with carrot-top hair and a sunny, though occasionally vague disposition, answering to the name of Jack?

Baker’s Wife: Not the one partial to a white cow?

Jack’s Mother: He’s the one.

Baker’s Wife: Have you seen the cow?

Jack’s Mother: No, and I don’t care to ever again. (Confidential) Children can be very queer about their animals. You be very careful with your children...

Baker’s Wife: I have no children.

Jack’s Mother: That’s okay too.

Baker’s Wife: Yes...well, I’ve not seen your son today.

Jack’s Mother: (Annoyed) I hope he didn’t go up that beanstalk again. Quit while you’re ahead I say.
(She begins to exit) Jack...! Jack...!

(Wife, after a moment’s pause, exits in the other direction; Baker enters)

Baker: (Forlorn) Moo...Moo...

(Mysterious Man appears from nowhere)

Mysterious Man: Moo! Looking for your cow?

(Mysterious Man signals off stage and Milky-White enters)

Baker: Where did you find her?
(Mysterious Man ducks back behind a tree as Baker goes to cow. He turns, and sees the old man is gone)
Hello?

(Baker takes cow and exits. Mysterious Man reappears and watches after Baker. Witch surprises him. Witch touches Mysterious Man with her cane. He falls to the ground, groveling)

Witch: What are you doing?
Mysterious Man: I am here to make amends.

Witch: I want you to stay out of this old man!

Mysterious Man: I am here to see that your wish is granted.

Witch: You've caused enough trouble! Keep out of my path!

(SHE zaps him; HE runs off. SHE follows him. BAKER'S WIFE enters, pulling on a long strand of hair)

BAKER'S WIFE: Excuse me for this.

(SHE yanks hair three times. RAPUNZEL screams more loudly with each pull. On the third yank, the hair falls into the BAKER'S WIFE's hands; CINDERELLA enters as if pursued; SHE falls at the feet of the BAKER'S WIFE, losing one slipper)

You do take plenty of spills, don't you?

(BAKER'S WIFE picks up the slipper)

Cinderella: Hello. It's these slippers. They're not suited for these surroundings. Actually they're not much suited for dancing either.

BAKER'S WIFE: I'd say those slippers were as pure as gold.

Cinderella: Yes. They are all you could wish for in beauty.

(CINDERELLA takes the slipper back)

BAKER'S WIFE: What I wouldn't give for just one.

Cinderella: One isn't likely to do you much good. (SHE giggles)

BAKER'S WIFE: Was the ball as wonderful as last evening?

Cinderella: IT'S STILL A NICE BALL

BAKER'S WIFE: Yes...? And...?

Cinderella: And...

THEY HAVE FAR TOO MUCH FOOD.

BAKER'S WIFE: No, the Prince...

Cinderella: Oh, the Prince...

BAKER'S WIFE: Yes, the Prince.

Cinderella: IF HE KNEW WHO I REALLY WAS...

BAKER'S WIFE: Oh? Who?

Cinderella: I'M AFRAID I WAS RUDE.

BAKER'S WIFE: Oh? How?

Cinderella: NOW I'M BEING PURSUED

BAKER'S WIFE: Yes? And...

Cinderella: AND I'M NOT IN THE MOOD

BAKER'S WIFE: He must have really taken a liking to you.

(STEWARD enters the woods with black lantern and staff, searching. CINDERELLA'S PRINCE follows)
Cinderella: I have no experience with Princes and castles and gowns.

Baker's Wife: Nonsense, every girl dreams...

Steward: Look, sir. Look!

Cinderella’s Prince: Yes. There she is. Move. Move. Move.

Cinderella: I must run!

(BAKER'S WIFE grabs a shoe)

Baker's Wife: And I must have your shoe!

Cinderella: Stop that!

(The two engage in a tug-of-war over the shoe as dialogue elapses)

Baker's Wife: I need it to have a baby!

Cinderella: And I need it to get out of here!

(CINDERELLA wins the battle over the shoe, and desperately runs off, BAKER'S WIFE is embarrassed by her own behavior. SHE straightens herself up as CINDERELLA’S PRINCE with STEWARD bound onstage, only to curtsey again)

Steward: Where did she go?

Baker's Wife: Who?

Steward: Don't play the fool, woman!

Baker’s Wife: Oh, you mean the beautiful young maiden in the ball gown? She went in that direction. I was trying to hold her here for you...

Cinderella’s Prince: I can capture my own damsel, thank you.

(CINDERELLA’S PRINCE begins to go of towards CINDERELLA)

Baker's Wife: Yes, sir.

(PRINCE and STEWARD dash off-stage. We hear STEPSISTERS and STEPMOTHER. They enter, first looking behind them then looking towards CINDERELLA’S PRINCE)

Stepmother: (to BAKER’S WIFE) Where did he go?

Baker's Wife: Who?

Lucinda: The Prince, of course!

Baker’s Wife: That direction. But you'll never reach them!

Florinda: We would have if that mongrel with the cow hadn't molested us.

Baker's Wife: Cow?

(STEPSISTERS giggle. BAKER runs onstage with MILKY-WHITE. They are both out of breath)

Baker: (holding up an ear of corn) Please, let me just compare this color with that of your own.

(THEY chortle as they exit. There is a long moment of silence. BAKER’S WIFE and BAKER stare at each other)
Baker: (Dejected) I thought you were returning home. (angry) I've had no luck.

Baker's Wife: You've the cow!

Baker: Yes. I've the cow. We've only two of the four. 
(MILKY-WHITE continues to breathe heavily)

Baker's Wife: Three.

Baker: Two!

Baker's Wife: (Pulls the hair from her pocket) Three. Compare this to your corn. 
(BAKER does so and smiles)

Baker: Where did you find it?

Baker's Wife: (false modesty) I pulled it from a maiden in a tower.

Baker: (looking at hair) Threen!

Baker's Wife: And I almost had the fourth, but she got away.

Baker: We've one entire day left. Surely we can locate the slipper by then.

Baker's Wife: We? You mean you'll allow me to stay?

Baker: Well... perhaps it will take the two of us to get this child.

Baker's Wife: YOU'VE CHANGED,
    YOU'RE DARING
    YOU'RE DIFFERENT IN THE WOODS
    MORE SURE
    MORE SHARING
    YOU'RE GETTING US THROUGH THE WOODS
    IF YOU COULD SEE...
    YOU'RE NOT THE MAN WHO STARTED,
    AND MUCH MORE OPENHEARTED
    THAN I KNEW
    YOU TO BE.

Baker: IT TAKES TWO
    I THOUGHT ONE WAS ENOUGH,
    IT'S NOT TRUE:
    IT TAKES TWO OF US.
    YOU CAME THROUGH
    WHEN THE JOURNEY WAS ROUGH
    IT TOOK YOU
    IT TOOK TWO OF US.

    IT TAKES CARE,
    IT TAKES PATIENCE AND FEAR AND DESPAIR
    TO CHANGE
    THOUGH YOU SWEAR TO CHANGE
    WHO CAN TELL IF YOU DO?
    IT TAKES TWO.
Baker's Wife: YOU'VE CHANGED.
   YOU'RE THRIVING.
   THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT THE WOODS.
   NOT JUST SURVIVING
   YOU'RE BLOSSOMING IN THE WOODS

   AT HOME I FEAR
   WE'D BE THE SAME FOREVER,
   AND THEN OUT HERE...
   YOU'RE PASSIONATE, CHARMING, CONSIDERATE, CLEVER...

Baker: IT TAKES ONE
   TO BEGIN, BUT THEN ONCE
   YOU'VE BEGUN
   IT TAKES TWO OF YOU.
   IT'S NO FUN
   BUT WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE
   YOU CAN DO
   WHEN THERE'S TWO OF YOU.

   IF I DARE
   IT'S BECAUSE I'M BECOMING
   AWARE OF US
   AS A PAIR OF US,
   EACH ACCEPTING A SHARE
   OF WHAT'S THERE.

Baker, Baker's Wife: WE'VE CHANGED
   WE'RE STRANGERS
   I'M MEETING YOU IN THE WOODS
   WHO MINDS
   WHAT DANGERS?
   I KNOW WE'LL GET PAST THE WOODS.
   AND ONCE WE'RE PAST
   LET'S HOPE THE CHANGES LAST

   BEYOND WOODS
   BEYOND WITCHES AND SLIPPERS AND HOODS,
   JUST THE TWO OF US
   BEYOND LIES,
   SAFE AT HOME WITH OUR BEAUTIFUL PRIZE,
   JUST A FEW OF US

   IT TAKES TRUST.
   IT TAKES JUST A BIT MORE
   AND WE'RE DONE.
   WE WANT FOUR
   WE HAD NONE
   WE'VE GOT THREE
   WE NEED ONE
   IT TAKES TWO.

(we hear the slow chimes of midnight begin; a hen dashes onstage, closely followed by JACK)
Jack: STOP HER! STOP THAT HEN!
(BAKER grabs hen)
Oh providence! My Milky-White.
(JACK gives the cow a kiss)
And the owners. And my hen!

Baker: (squeals) Look what this hen has dropped in my hand!

Baker’s Wife: (excited) A golden egg! I’ve never seen a golden egg!
(first chime of midnight)

Jack: You see. I promised you more than the five gold pieces I gave you, sir.

Baker’s Wife: Five gold pieces?

Baker: (to JACK) Now, I never said I would sell...

Jack: But you took the five gold pieces.

Baker’s Wife: You took five gold pieces!

Baker: I didn’t take, you gave.

Baker’s Wife: Where are the five gold pieces?

Baker: An old man...

(JACK goes to take MILKY-WHITE. BAKER holds her rope from him. Simultaneous dialogue)

Jack: (getting upset) You said I could have my cow!

Baker: Now, I never said you could. I said you might.

Baker’s Wife: You would take money before a child!

(MILKY-WHITE lets out a terrible yelp, and falls to the ground, dead. silence)

Jack: Milky-White is dead...

Baker’s Wife: Two!

(blackout. last chime of midnight. music under. One by one, the characters appear and disappear, as in the "first midnight," speaking their lines in rhythm, as night changes into dawn)

Witch: Two midnights gone!

Cinderella: Wanting a ball is not wanting a Prince...

Cinderella’s Prince: Near may be better than far,
But it still isn’t there...

Rapunzel’s Prince: overlapping Near may be better than far,
But it still isn’t there...

Cinderella: The Ball...

Cinderella’s Prince: So near...
Rapunzel's Prince: So far...

Stepmother: You can never love somebody else's child--

Florinda, Lucinda: Two midnights gone!

Stepmother: --The way you love--

Cinderella's Prince: So near...

Stepmother: --Your own.

Cinderella: The Prince...

Cinderella's Prince: So far...

Granny: The greatest prize can often lie
At the end of the thorniest path...

Cinderella's Prince, Rapunzel's Prince: Two midnights gone!
Two midnights gone!

Stepmother, Florinda, Lucinda: (overlapping) Two midnights,
Two midnights gone!

Granny: (overlapping) Two midnights gone!

END OF SCENE THREE

Act One, Scene 4

(as the lights come up, we see the BAKER'S WIFE and the BAKER, bedraggled and exhausted)

Narrator: Two midnights gone. And the exhausted baker and his wife buried the dead Milky-White, believing that when the witch said a cow as white as milk, she was referring to a live one.

Baker: You must go to the village in search of another cow.

Baker's Wife: And what do you propose I use to buy this cow?

Baker: (takes remaining bean from pocket) Here. Tell them it's magic.

Baker's Wife: No person with a brain larger than this is going to exchange a cow for a bean.

Baker: (losing patience) Then steal it.

Baker's Wife: (angry) Steal it? Just two days ago, you were accusing me of exercising deceit in securing the cow.

Baker: Then don't steal it and resign yourself to a childless life.

Baker's Wife: (calm, but cold) I feel it best you go for the cow, as I have met a maiden with a golden slipper these previous eves, and I think I might succeed in winning one of her shoes.

Baker: Fine. That is simply fine.

(BAKER'S WIFE gathers her things and begins to exit in one direction, the BAKER in the other; we hear RAPUNZEL scream; they run off in fear)

Narrator: Unfortunately for Rapunzel--