

ACT I

SETTING: *The forest surrounding a small village.*

AT RISE: *In the dark we hear the sounds of the forest. Suddenly a wolf howls. Lights up on WOLF stealing into the forest. He looks furtively around.*

WOLF

*(Howling)*  
AAAAOOOOOOOOOHHHHHHHH!

*(He exits. Another moment of forest sounds then suddenly CLARISSA enters at a run.)*

CLARISSA

*(Calling off)*  
The wolves are back!

*(HUNTER and PETER enter another part of the forest.)*

HUNTER/PETER

*(Calling off)*  
The wolves are back!

*(GRANNY and RED enter yet another part of the forest.)*

GRANNY/RED

*(Calling off)*  
The wolves are back!

CLARISSA/HUNTER/PETER/GRANNY/RED  
*The wolves are back!*

*(CLARISSA begins pacing and talking to herself.)*

CLARISSA

The thing we've been dreading for fifty years...

PETER

*(Turning to HUNTER)*  
Father, did you hear the news...?

I heard it.

HUNTER

The wolves are back!

CLARISSA

*(Turning to GRANNY)*  
Granny...?

RED

Don't be scared, Red.

GRANNY

But, you heard what they're saying...

RED

The wolves are back!

PETER

Nobody's safe, not man nor beast...

CLARISSA

Don't be afraid, Peter.

HUNTER

I'm not afraid!

PETER

The wolves are back!

RED

We pigs will have to change the way we live!

CLARISSA

I've been preparin' you for this day...

GRANNY

I'll need your help, son.

HUNTER

Learned you everythin' I know...

GRANNY

CLARISSA

It's too dangerous to live outdoors...

RED

Not *everything*, Granny.

CLARISSA

No more pigpens, no more mud baths...

PETER

You can count on me, Father. I'll be brave and strong, just like you!

HUNTER

That's my boy.

CLARISSA

It's time to build a shelter – a sturdy shelter made of *brick*...

GRANNY

What else is there to know?

RED

You never told me what a wolf looks like, Granny.

*(Beat. They all turn to look at GRANNY.)*

CLARISSA

Yeah!

PETER

Hey!

HUNTER

She's got a point.

CLARISSA/PETER/HUNTER

What *does* a wolf look like?

RED

You were the only one alive when the wolves were here before.

HUNTER

That's right!

PETER/CLARISSA

So tell us!

RED/HUNTER/PETER/CLARISSA

What does a wolf look like?

GRANNY

Well, now, let me see... as I recall... a wolf has real big eyes... Oh, and real big ears...

CLARISSA

Big eyes and big ears...

PETER

Is that all?

GRANNY

Oh, and his *teeth!* They're *gi-normous!* And sharp as razors. Why I remember one time when a wolf got holt of our pet pig Polly and just ripped her to shreds... It was a real mess.

*(Beat. They all turn and look at CLARISSA.)*

Oops...

CLARISSA

Gotta go.

*(CLARISSA hastily exits.)*

RED

Granny! You shouldn't have said that! Poor Clarissa!

GRANNY

Well, she's got to know the truth so she can protect herself. And fact is, we got us more pressin' things to worry 'bout than hurtin' a pig's feelings.

HUNTER

What do you mean?

GRANNY

I mean the *sheep*.

RED

Oh no!

PETER

The *sheep!*

GRANNY

That's right! The *sheep*. You younguns heard the stories but I seen it for myself, what can happen to a flock of sheep when them wolves are on the roam. One by one, in the dark of night, them sheep'll disappear...

PETER

But we depend on those sheep for our very existence! Without their wool this village...

GRANNY

Has nothin'.

PETER

We'll starve!

GRANNY

We starved fifty year ago. That's why them wolves was chased off in the first place.

*(She turns to HUNTER.)*

You know 'bout that – your daddy was the one who done it. Ain't that right?

HUNTER

Yes.

PETER

Father still has the gun, don't you, Father?

HUNTER

Yes.

GRANNY

Good. Cuz it looks like you're gonna need it.

RED

Speaking of sheep, has Bo Peep heard the news? Does she know the wolves are back?

PETER

I bet not. She's been too busy moving the flock to the winter meadow.

HUNTER

Well, somebody needs to tell her.

I'll do it. GRANNY

No, I'll do it. HUNTER

No, I'll do it. PETER

No, I'll do it. RED

GRANNY  
*(To RED)*  
No! *You* ain't gonna do it.

RED  
Granny...

GRANNY  
A girl young as you, alone in the forest with them wolves on the roam...

RED  
Granny, didn't you tell me not to be afraid? Didn't you spend my whole life teaching me how to take care of myself? Preparing me for this very day? The day they came back? Granny, you gotta let me go. You gotta let me do this. It's time.

*(Beat. GRANNY touches RED on the cheek, then...)*

GRANNY  
We'll all go.

*(To RED.)*

But *you* be careful.

RED  
Yes, ma'am.

HUNTER  
Peter!

PETER  
Yes, sir?

HUNTER  
It's time for the gun.

PETER  
Grandfather's gun?

HUNTER  
Can you fetch it for me?

PETER  
Yes, sir!

*(PETER hurries off.)*

GRANNY  
*(To HUNTER)*  
The gun. Your daddy's gun. After all this time. I cain't hardly believe it...

PETER (O.S.)  
Here it is!

*(PETER enters with an old rifle. He hands it solemnly to HUNTER, who examines it carefully for a moment.)*

HUNTER  
I was hoping I'd never have to use this.

PETER  
Have you ever fired it before, Father?

HUNTER  
Once. When I was a boy. My father wanted to make sure I knew how to handle it properly... Bullets?

*(PETER pulls six bullets out of his pocket and hands them to HUNTER.)*

PETER  
There are only six left.

HUNTER  
That's not very many, is it?

*(He loads one into the rifle and sticks the rest of them in his coat pocket. He looks up at the others.)*

HUNTER (cont.)

Well, we best get to it. The wolves are back.

GRANNY

There's four different meadows, one in each direction. We'll split up. The first one to find Bo Peep, tell her the news then help her guard them sheep 'til the rest of us can get there. Remember – without them sheep, we die.

*(Beat.)*

I'll take the South Meadow.

HUNTER

I'll take the North Meadow.

PETER

I've got the East.

RED

That leaves me the West...

*(They all look at each other a moment.)*

HUNTER

Let's go.

*(RED, GRANNY and PETER exit. HUNTER is about to follow when we hear a wolf howl in the distance. HUNTER grabs the rifle determinedly and exits opposite PETER. A moment passes as we hear the sounds of the forest then we hear a wolf howl again. It gets louder and louder and then surprisingly ends in a big sneeze. VIRGINIA enters, carrying a suitcase, looking quite lost. She sneezes again then sits on her suitcase in despair and howls mournfully. No sooner does her howl fade away then we hear...)*

BO PEEP (O.S.)

*Snowflake? Snowflake...?! Come out, come out wherever you are!*

*(Enter BO PEEP in full shepherdess regalia. She searches about, oblivious to VIRGINIA's presence.)*



BO PEEP

*(Yelling off)*  
C'mon, now, Snowflake! This isn't funny anymore! *Where are you?!*

*(VIRGINIA sneezes behind her.)*

Aha!

*(She whirls around and finds only VIRGINIA.)*

You're not Snowflake.

VIRGINIA

No. I'm Virginia.

BO PEEP

Say, you haven't seen a small, white sheep hiding around here anywhere, have you?

VIRGINIA

No, I've only just arrived myself.

BO PEEP

*(Calling off)*  
Give it up, Snowflake! I'll find you yet or my name isn't Bo Peep!

*(To VIRGINIA)*

Usually when they wander off I just leave 'em alone and then they come home wagging their tails behind 'em but *Snowflake*... oh, she's a *rebel*, that one. She knows very well I need to get the flock moved to the winter meadow...

*(Calling off.)*

*SNOWFLAKE!!*

*(Beat. Nothing. She turns back to VIRGINIA.)*

Y'know, if it wasn't for the rulebook, I'd leave her behind. I swear I would!

VIRGINIA

Rulebook?

*(BO PEEP pulls a small book out of her pocket and holds it up.)*

BO PEEP

“Shepherding One-Two-Three.” Tells you everything you need to know about herding sheep. See, here it is...

*(She flips through the book.)*

Rule Number twenty-three: “If a shepherd has one hundred sheep and one of them goes astray, he must leave the ninety-nine in the hills and go and search for the lost one.”

VIRGINIA

Won’t the other sheep wander off without you there to keep an eye on them?

BO PEEP

Oh, no – not as long as I leave my shepherd’s staff stuck in the ground...

*(She points off.)*

See it? Way over there – in the East Meadow? That long stick...?

VIRGINIA

With the hook on top?

BO PEEP

That’s it! That’s my shepherd’s staff. It’s pretty powerful. The sheep will follow whoever carries it. Except Snowflake, of course. Snowflake won’t follow anybody. That’s why she’s lost...

*(VIRGINIA howls a sob.)*

Wow, that’s quite a howl you got there! I don’t think I’ve ever heard anything like that before... Oh, hey, are you crying? Why are you crying?

VIRGINIA

Because I’m lost, too – just like Snowflake. I’m lost in this forest.

BO PEEP

I thought only sheep got lost in the forest. You’re *not* a sheep, are you?

VIRGINIA

*(Howling)*

Nooooo...

BO PEEP

So how come you’re lost?