

WELL IN THE WOODS TITLE

– a Teen Drama

by

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WELL IN THE WOODS

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CHARACTERS

NARRATOR – a bard with a drum

MALE CHILD – macho and in diapers

LONG-GOWNED CHILD

THE TWIN – Long Gowned Child's look-alike, with no face

"VOICES" MONOLOGUE – a tree

"GRAVE" MONOLOGUE – a tree

"BOY WHO COULDN'T CRY" MONOLOGUE – a tree

"GIRL WHO WOULDN'T REMEMBER" MONOLOGUE – a tree

FRIEND – of Girl Who Wouldn't Remember

MALE COMPANION – of Girl Who Wouldn't Remember

TRIO OF FACELESS TEENS

NOTES

Actors may double-up on roles.

Certain business, such as cart wheeling MALE CHILD, is written for the skills of particular actors, and should be modified to fit the talents of cast members.

The TREES are on stage at all times.

The back-drop is a scrim, your basic sheet. Signs that appear above it should do so at askew angles, in humorous, puppet theater style.

The NARRATOR functions as an M.C. at a circus, like a stage manager, a therapist, a visionary, a poet – which s/he is.

Pink Floyd's songs are *One of These Days* and *The Great Gig in the Sky*. Cat Stevens' song is *If You Want to Sing Out, Sing Out*.

WELL IN THE WOODS

[In front of a green or woodsy backdrop, various Actors stand as enchanted Trees – holding a branch, having twigs for fingers, etc. A NARRATOR with a drum roams or sits upon the stage. Dressed woodsy, s/he beats out a rhythm to the narrated tale.]

[A sign appears above the backdrop, announcing: PROLOGUE.]

NARRATOR

Once upon a time there were parents.
Long, long before divorce was fashionable.
And these parents had a child.

[A very masculine MALE CHILD in diapers, with bow in his hair, cartwheels onto the stage. He presents himself with his thumb in mouth, and then performs a back flip. Meanwhile, a music box plays *London Bridge*.]

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

And the child lived in a house...

[A rough sketch of an apartment complex rises above the backdrop. NARRATOR corrects him/herself.]

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

Or in an apartment. And near the house/apartment there were woods.

[Drumming stops suddenly.]

There are always woods close to home.
And as the child grew up...

[Drumming resumes. Male Child cartwheels offstage. LONG GOWNED CHILD enters.]

The woods grew all around her.

[Pink Floyd's *One of These Days* begins. Long-Gowned Child reacts.]

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

No matter how fast the child ran, she couldn't escape the woods.

[The MUSIC's volume increases, and a sign appears above the backdrop:
ACT I: SUFFER the LITTLE CHILDREN.
The TWIN ACTOR enters with no face.
The CHILD, is stylized movements,
tries to escape her TWIN.]

[One TREE suddenly moves and comes downstage. Another sign appears:
VOICES. Music fades to accommodate monologues; then rises again.]

VOICES MONOLOGUE

The voices come up the stairs after me. Louder and louder they seem to shout. I try to hide, organizing my thoughts, my things. I alphabetize my CDs and books. By author, singer, title, date. It's my system for slipping away, escaping the voices. But stomping after me, they race up the stairs. I always seem to be the focus of blame for my mom's anger. So I try to keep things neat... But my grades aren't as easy to tidy up as my room. And then the worst happens... My dad's voice. Tears fly from my eyes. I want to die, pull away and hide. But the voices chase me down, surround me, and scream in my ears.

[The VOICES MONOLOGUE covers ears and closes in again as enchanted tree. Another tree comes to life. The VOICES sign is replaced by a sign saying: A GRAVE TALE. This actor sets a tombstone upright. She holds a dandelion as she speaks.]

GRAVE MONOLOGUE

Unfortunately, my mom was forced to leave the country. You see, he's an agent for the CIA. She went on some secret mission. My dad saw her off, and then came home to watch my brother and me. Then he married this horrible other woman, as a front. So no one would suspect my mom's secret mission. But I know my mom's gonna come home soon from that foreign country. It's been such a long time. She must be almost done by now. She knows I'm waiting.

[The GRAVE MONOLOGUE weeps.
The MUSIC has reached the ominous part.]

NARRATOR

The child kept running, blocking things out, trying to escape. But the child couldn't outrun the wound.

[The faceless TWIN walks calmly after the terrified LONG-GOWNED CHILD, who tries to escape. They are dressed in identical long gowns, but the TWIN's face is gauze.]

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

The wound was within.

[A third tree comes alive and moves downstage. A new sign appears above the backdrop: THE BOY WHO COULDN'T CRY.]

CRY MONOLOGUE

In case you're wondering, I don't cry. I haven't been able to cry for ten years. When I was six, I ran away from home. I packed six cans of soup and a pot. When they caught me, Anne – I won't call her my mom – Anne told her new husband to beat me. And he did. He'd been beating me about half an hour with his belt, when I looked up at him, my eyes pleading, about ready to cry. It hurt so much. But then he said those famous words that I'll carry with me for the rest of my life. "Don't cry, Billy. Don't cry, you sissy. If you cry, I'll beat you harder." So I didn't cry. Not then. Not now. Nothing can make me cry. I got so callous, I learned to laugh at pain. Not only my own, but other people's pain too. I learned that to make it through life, I had to keep alert and keep eyes in the back of my head. My mom – Anne would come home from work at night and beat me while I was sleeping. So every night before I went to bed, I'd whisper, "I don't need anybody, I don't need anybody." And I don't. SO who needs to cry?

[The CRY MONOLOGUE, with jaw jutting out, stands defiant. A fourth tree, GIRL WHO WOULDN'T REMEMBER comes downstage with her FRIEND. The FRIEND is reciting a poem from Milne's *Now We Are Six*.]

FRIEND

"When I was one I had just begun.
When I was two I was nearly new.
When I was three I was hardly me.

FRIEND (CONT'D)

When I was four I was not much more.
When I was five I was just alive..."

[A new sign replaces the former.
It says, THE GIRL WHO WOULDN'T
REMEMBER.]

WOULDN'T REMEMBER MONOLOGUE

Some time between "nearly new" and "not much more." I remember crawling into my little brother's bed, crying and covering my ears. My dad was beating up my mom again. The next day after school she told me and my brother that we were going out for dinner, and then to the mall, shopping. We did, but when it came time to go home, my mom started driving in the wrong direction. She said, "I need to talk to you kids..." We both started crying, and I started shouting, "Please don't say 'divorce,' please don't say 'divorce' - over and over again. She told us we were driving to Stephenville to stay the night there, that she was leaving dad. I was scared, but I felt better because she didn't say, "divorce." My brother reacted much differently. He was in the back seat, and he pretended he was dead. He freaked out.

(to FRIEND)

It's very confusing because I think I've blocked out a lot of the things that have happened to me.

[The FRIEND comforts the WOULDN'T
REMEMBER MONOLOGUE.]

[When the Pink Floyd ended, the
LONG-GOWNED CHILD had begun to
build a circular wall around
herself. It is almost completed
now, hiding her. Her faceless TWIN
stands calmly watching.]

[The NARRATOR drums.]

NARRATOR

The child put up a wall to block out the pain that pursued her. But as long as she blocked out the pain, hid from the hurt, as long as the child made believe nothing was wrong, the child had no face.

(stops drumming; drums)

She became one of the enchanted children in the woods.
The numb children. Children who had blocked out their pain.
Children who tried to escape from their wound.

[A sign appears above the scrim saying, THE FACELESS CHILD]

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

And at night in the enchanted woods, the wind would whisper the pain of all the numb children. And in every house, into every pillow pain was whimpered, tears were wept, and dreams came hard.

[The wind SOUND that concludes the Pink Floyd song is heard as the TWIN without a face wanders out of the woods. The LONG-GOWNED CHILD is now completely hidden in the well – the circular wall.]

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

Meanwhile, the Faceless Child was split in two.

[A TRIO OF FACELESS TEENS appears outside the woods. They are trendily dressed with all the “in” accessories; however, they have gauze instead of faces. Nonetheless, they huddle together, striking “cool” poses as they hang out.]

[A sign appears above the scrim saying, OUR DISTRESSING DISGUISES. The TWIN wanders over to the TRIO. They offer her trendy things to try on: hat, sunglasses, etc. But despite the accessories, the TRIO remains faceless.]

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

She tried on trendy masks and accessories to hide the fact that she had no face. But still the child was unhappy. Then, one day...

[A sign above scrim proclaims, ACT TWO: DESCENT INTO WELL. THUMP of the drum.]

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

One day, while wearing one of her distressing disguises, the child met a stranger, the Healer.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

She had never met anyone like this before. She certainly had never seen him on TV. She certainly hadn't heard of her in magazines. The Healer wanted to help. But the child had no face. She was afraid of the woods.

[A sign appears with an arrow pointing that says, WOULD'S.]

NARRATOR (CONT'D)
(pointing)

But the Healer said that she could point out a path through the woods. The Road Not Taken.

[A second sign accompanies the WOULD'S sign, saying THE ROAD NOT TAKEN.]

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

The child hesitated. But the Unique Stranger took her by the hand and pointed to the woods.

(takes CHILD's hand;
addressing her)

All this is yours. The mountains, the trees, the streams. All this is yours, my child. Whether you are in pain or not. Whether you have a mom or dad or not. Despite your wound, all this is yours.

(to Audience)

And the child listened. The healer continued to teach. She told the child that only if she went into the woods...

[The WOULD'S sign trembles while two complementary signs appear: "NOW THIS IS..." says one. "...GONNA HURT A LITTLE," says the other.]

NARRATOR (CONT'D)
(guiding the CHILD)

...only if she searched in the well of pain... only then would she have a face again.

(beat)

And the child trusted. And the child ventured back into the woods.

[As the NARRATOR guides the TWIN toward the well, s/he hands her a bucket.]

[The VOICES MONOLOGUE comes
downstage. The VOICES sign appears.
Pink Floyd's *Great Gig in the Sky*
is background music for ACT TWO.]

VOICES MONOLOGUE
(covering ears)

1,2,3,4,5,6,7...
(covers ears harder;
louder)

1,2,3,4,5,6,7...
(plays hopscotch; ears
covered)

1,2,3,4,5,6,7...
(stops)

I tried to talk to the other kids in the playground.
But every time I tried, I'd soon be left sitting all by
myself. I was never part of the groups. I didn't know the
right people. I didn't wear the right clothes. I didn't have
the right haircut. I got good grades and wore eyeglasses. I
wasn't worth having as a friend. 1,2,3,4,5,6,7... The boys
would come up behind me and snicker and make sarcastic
comments. "I love you. Will you go out with me? You are so-o
cute." I felt tears in my eyes, but I gritted my teeth.,
Clenched my fists, and stared straight ahead. The times I
turned around to face them were worse. They'd bust out
laughing, hysterical. Right in my face. Voices.

(covers ears)

Always hurtful voices. 1,2,3,4,5,6,7. All good children go to
heaven.

[The TWIN buckets water out of the
well. A GRAVE TALE appears. Pink
Floyd's song peaks during the
following.]

GRAVE MONOLOGUE

I found my mom's grave. I went to Denver and found my mom's
tombstone in the graveyard there. I laid down upon the cool
stone for a long time, howling. I sobbed and screamed and
cried. "Mommy, Mommy, why did you have to go? Why?"
My mom left me when I was three. She died." Don't die, Mommy.
Don't go, please. I need you. All the other kids have
mommies. Come back. Please..."

(sits up; dries eyes)

You never get over it. I get so pissed off when some idiot
says, "You'll get over it." 'Cause you don't.

GRAVE MONOLOGUE (CONT'D)

I don't expect to ever get over it. Ever. It's been 10,12 years. And every now and again I get bowled over. My body says, "Enough with this numb bullshit. Let's have a good cry." Big-time losses never go away.. But I guess that's all right. That's what makes us unique. Our personal pain. That's where our strength comes from... I mean, I don't go to movies where mothers die or get killed or anything. Forget about it. I'd go off the chart. I'm no masochist. But I don't run away from pain anymore either. It's what makes me strong.

NARRATOR

(with drum)

No giant can come along and lift you up. No fantasy heroes to help. No handsome princes. No Terminator Two. That magic stuff isn't gonna do. Not even mushrooms or chew. This is bucket by bucket work. Sweet sweat of self-discovery. Dipping down, way down, into the pain. Bucket by bucket, sift your pain.

[The TWIN continues to bucket out water from the well. THE BOY WHO WOULDN'T CRY sign appears above scrim.]

CRY MONOLOGUE

My moth- Anne was now beating me 15 minutes a day with a stick from the back of a dining room chair. And then came the final straw. I had been sleeping my room when she came storming in and hit me square in the lungs. And then in the face. I rolled to the opposite side of the bed, trying to draw my knife that I had hid under my pillow. I left that morning.

(pause)

I remember this rooster that I used to have that I thought was neat. But I chased him around the yard till I caught him. Then I held his head under the cesspool for a minute or so. Then I pulled his head up out of the water and chased him some more. He ran into the hen house. But he got his head caught in the back fence somehow and started flailing about, flapping his wings. I heard a crack, and then he stopped moving. My first reaction was t be mad at the chicken. "Why couldn't you have been tougher?! Sissy! Crybaby!"

(beat)

But that wasn't what my second reaction was. I cuddled the dead rooster in my arms, holding it to my body, crying, crying, because I had killed one of the things I cared most about.

CRY MONOLOGUE (CONT'D)
(after a pause)

I miss the touch my mom used to give me when I was really little. I wish for and yearn for that touch and care. Sometimes I say I don't need anybody, but now I call bullshit on myself whenever I say it. I learned I *do* need people. My heart is aching to care. But I hold myself back.

[While the LONG-GOWNED CHILD
buckets water and MONOLOGUES speak,
the REMEMBER MONOLOGUE has wandered
almost behind the backdrop scrim.]

[Now her FRIEND and a MALE
COMPANION guide her back downstage.
It appears as if the GIRL WHO
WOULDN'T REMEMBER has been crying.
Her sign appears above scrim.]

FRIEND
(guiding GIRL WHO WOULDN'T
REMEMBER back)

When my cousin was 12, a man dressed as a woman came through her bedroom window, held a knife to her throat, and forced her to have sex. She testified and the rapist went to jail. Supposedly for six years. But after three years, when she was 15, the rapist was released from jail. Nobody told my cousin. The rapist tracked her down and raped her again. My cousin has plans to kill her rapist. Meanwhile, she's moving to New York.

[The three friends sit down.
THE GIRL WHO WOULDN'T REMEMBER
still has her head bowed.]

MALE COMPANION

We were buying a house, and this real estate guy was showing it to us. Anyway, he said he had a job for me, if I wanted to earn some extra money. I never told anybody about this. Not even my therapist.

FRIEND

It's okay.

MALE COMPANION

I was only 11. My father said it was okay to go. So I got in this real estate guy's car, and we drove to this other house in the country he was selling. But on this dirt road he pulled over, and turned off the car.

MALE COMPANION (CONT'D)

He put his hand on my leg. Then he opened my zipper. I froze. I didn't know what to do. I let him do it. And then I felt like it was my fault.

FRIEND

It wasn't. It wasn't your fault.

MALE COMPANION

Sometimes I think I'll go back there. I'll go back and kill that guy.

FRIEND

Go ahead. Be angry. It's okay.

REMEMBER MONOLOGUE

Okay. I remember. I can tell you two, I think. Okay. My uncle used to live with us. Once when I was nine, it was the winter, and I was sleeping, and he crawled into bed with me. He said he was cold and wanted to get warmed up. He said he wanted to hug me. My dad never hugged me. And I always wanted him to. My uncle held me so tight, I felt safe. I felt nothing bad would ever scare me and my little brother again. And that maybe my uncle could protect my mom too; keep my dad from beating her up. But then my uncle started squeezing my waist...

[The FRIEND puts an arm around her.]

REMEMBER MONOLOGUE (CONT'D)

I got scared. I wished Wonder Woman would bust down the door and save me. He told me if I screamed he'd kill me. "And if yo ever tell anybody." He said, "I'll kill your little brother." I didn't know my uncle wanted to kill my little brother. We hadn't ever done anything to him. And then... And then there was the pain. A breaking and entering that tore my mind. My mind gave, I guess, because my body couldn't. My mind shut down, to shut it all out.

[As REMEMBER weeps, the NARRATOR comes forward, beating his drum.]

NARRATOR

The wound that had been a wall, was now a well. And in the well was life-giving water. When all the buckets of pain had been lifted to the surface, the Faceless Child rose up from behind the wall.

[The LONG-GOWNED CHILD, looking into a hand-held mirror, rises from behind the wall. She sets the mirror down, greets TWIN and unwraps TWIN'S facial gauze.]

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

The Child had found herself. She now had a face of her own.

[The CHILD and her TWIN take the bucket of water over to the three Friends sitting in a circle. With a ladle, they reverently share the water, as in a Native American ceremony.]

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

(drumming)

Sharing the water of her story took away her numbness. It took away her shame. It gave the Child back to her self. And she was strong. She recognized other numb children looking for their lost faces. And together they shared the cup of sorrow. And it was healing.

(drums)

Wherever your wound is, that is where your strength will be. The Healer can guide you through that pain.

[The VOICES MONOLOGUE comes downstage. A large sign appears above backdrop saying, "ACT III: THROUGH THE WOUND TO WONDER."]

VOICES MONOLOGUE

My wound was isolation. Nobody wanted me for a friend. But because of that isolation I discovered books. Books became my friends. My Healer.

(waves to the NARRATOR)

Books were my constant Healer. First, my childhood books – the ones my parents used to read to me, once upon a time. Remember those stories? The ones that soothed you to sleep at night, and made you believe in magic – with their elves and clowns and flutes and flowers?... I believed in magic then. And I still do...

VOICES MONOLOGUE (CONT'D)

I remember sitting in my room after a fight with my parents, or when a friend let me down, or during one of those times when the world seems to be collapsing all around. And there's these books - just sitting there, calm as can be, while the rest of the world is a swirl of chaos and frayed nerves. And the books, they just look at me with their colorful covers. They have so much innocence, carry so many memories. "Once upon a time... Long, long ago in a faraway land..." Those words are so soothing. And do the characters in these stories bomb nations "for the good of the country"? Or worry about payday? No. They're just juggling and falling into cookie dough, eating chicken soup with rice, bringing peace... Take a good look at those children's books of yours; alone, in your room. And be silent. Because I don't care what they say about the pain of being on the outside, looking in... 'Cause there's a whole lot of joy on this side of the window too.

[The VOICES MONOLOGUE - with an armful of books - moves briskly over to the "water circle" of friends. She joins the circle and begins sharing books with the others. She accepts the ladle of water.]

[Meanwhile, the GRAVE MONOLOGUE hurriedly comes downstage with an in-your-face demeanor. She points her index finger at the audience.]

GRAVE MONOLOGUE

Hey! Don't let them tell you "you'll get over it"; "you'll put it behind you". No! You gotta go through it. Go through your wound. Look through it like it were a window. And boy, you'll see new horizons all right. A new day will dawn, girl.

[The GRAVE MONOLOGUE plops down in the circle, and eagerly reaches for the ladle of water. While this group shares and shows affection, the BOY WHO COULDN'T CRY hangs back. Downstage in his track outfit he runs in place, getting nowhere.]

CRY MONOLOGUE

(running in place)

I started running when I was seven - to make my parents proud of me. "So what?" My moth- Anne said.

CRY MONOLOGUE (CONT'D)

"You won a race, so what?" Sometimes now I think maybe I run to get back at my parents. Because to them it's a hard thing, running. They can't do it. Recently she said, "I'm sorry, Billy, for beating yo." And this time I said, "So what?" What do you want me to do, jump up and shoot sparks outa my ass? So she's sorry, so what? That's for her. Not for me. This forgiveness thing: forget it! That's for later. Right now I hate them. And it's good.

(pause; still running)

I run for myself now. It makes me feel like I'm in control. That's not too much to ask, is it? To have a little control over my life?

[The NARRATOR approaches and whispers something in CRY BOY's ear. CRY BOY, still facing forward as he runs in place, nods.]

CRY MONOLOGUE (CONT'D)

But I gotta admit: Coach helped me. I don't let people get too close, get inside me, but Coach— He's been there for me all three years. Driving me home from practice, giving me odd jobs to earn spending money. If there's anybody you could say I let my walls down with, I guess— 'Cause Coach has been like kinda a father figure. He helped me fill out this college application for a track scholarship, and—

[The CRY BOY lowers his head. He stops running. He wipes away a tear with the back of his hand. The NARRATOR places a hand on the BOY's shoulder, nodding encouragement.]

CRY MONOLOGUE (CONT'D)

I guess you could say the group's been—
(indicates circle of friends)

The group's the closest thing I have to love in my life. But it's hard to get used to it. I'm scared of it.

[The NARRATOR gently guides the BOY to the circle of friends. They welcome him. He accepts this, but sits slightly apart. Tentatively, he takes the ladle of water and drinks.]

REMEMBER MONOLOGUE
 (seated in circle; to CRY
 BOY)

The first meeting I went to, I told them all my most shameful stuff. And they gave me their phone numbers! To call them!

[She holds out her hand.
 While the NARRATOR comes downstage,
 drumming, the CRY BOY stares at the
 extended hand.]

NARRATOR

Where your wound is,
 Where your scars are,
 That's where your genius will be.
 Wherever the wound appears in your psyche:
 Shaming mom,
 Drunken dad,
 feeling crazy,
 disability.
 Whether the hurt's from isolation,
 abandonment,
 frustration
 or disease;
 the wound is the window
 through which you'll see the sun.
 The wound is the fire
 in which you'll forge your gift
 you'll one day give to others.
 Without your wound
 where would your powers be?

[Cat Stevens' song *If You Want to Sing Out, Sing Out* begins very low.
 Some in the circle begin to sway.
 The REMEMBER MONOLOGUE still has
 her hand out. She extends it
 further and CRY BOY holds up his
 hand but can't extend it.]

[Meanwhile, the NARRATOR has set
 down his drum and come to the lip
 of the stage to intimately address
 the audience.]

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

When you were first born into this world, you each brought this fantastic force with you, this incredible energy, this legacy of thousands of years, coming out of centuries, from eons, through plant and animal life and –
 And people didn't want that. They wanted a nice boy.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

They wanted a good little girl.
 They didn't want the energy you brought
 You couldn't believe it.
 They didn't want you the way you were.
 That was your first rejection.

(beat)

So you invented a false face. You put on a mask. To survive.
 Miss Rebel. Mr. Do-Gooder. Miss Independent. Mr. Athlete.
 Miss Jokester. You put on a mask. To survive.
 Forgive yourself. You did the right thing.
 You took care of yourself. You survived. There you are!
 Let's give ourselves a hand for surviving.

[The CRY BOY takes the REMEMBER
 GIRL's hand. The NARRATOR
 encourages the audience to applaud,
 and as the MUSIC rises, the circle
 of friends stand and applaud.]

[Almost as soon as the applause
 starts, the NARRATOR holds up his
 hand for silence. MUSIC fades.]

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

But now the real work begins.
 The sweet sweat of self-discovery.
 Turn off your ipod, computer, your phone.
 Listen to the silence instead,
 the still small voice within.
 Listen to your heart.
 Take hints from your dreams.
 Bow your head to the earth and listen.
 There's healing.

[The Cat Stevens song rises in
 volume and the group of friends get
 silly and affectionate: dancing,
 tickling, teasing.]

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

(inviting audience on-
 stage)

Come look into the well.
 Look into the wound.
 Look into the well of pain and see your true face.
 Accept yourself.
 Then come accept the rest of us.

[Actors planted in the audience come up on stage and gaze into the well. The circle of friends dances into the audience. Some lead audience members by the hand onto the stage.]

[A sign appears above the backdrop:
AUDIENCE GETS INTO THE ACT!]

[When the song *If You Want to Sing Out, Sing Out* ends, we find the cast sitting on the lip of the stage, or cross-legged on the ground. They're in place for any post-performance interaction.]

JUST THE BEGINNING...