

# **Impossible But True in a Tavern**

A full-length musical, loosely adapted from  
Washington Irving's "Rip Van Winkle,"  
written to be performed in a tavern.

**Music, Lyrics and Book by Dan Furman**  
additional lyrics by Mary-Liz McNamara\*

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\*Mary-Liz McNamara contributed to the lyrics of: "Impossible But True," "Women Love to Dance," "The Trouble With Dreams, and wrote lyrics for "The Honeycake Song."

## CHARACTERS:

(All characters from Act I are 20 years older in Act II.)

1. **Rip Van Winkle**--male, 25-30yrs. Carefree dreamer, loved by kids and dogs.
2. **Rebecca Van Winkle**--Rip's wife, female, 25-30yrs. Fiery and practical, with strong convictions and prone to losing her temper.
3. **Ben/Jonathan Doolittle**--Rip's best friend, male, 17 yrs./--Town mayor and Jenny's husband in Act II, 45yrs, clean-shaven with tri-cornered revolutionary hat.
4. **Jenny/ Dame Rachel Vedder**--Ingenuer. Vedder's daughter, Rebecca's best friend, Female, 17 yrs/wife of Nicolaus Vedder, fashionable town lady, conservative, 40 yrs.
5. **Nicolaus Vedder/Reverend William Gansevoort/Henrick Hudson**--town patriarch and mayor in Act I, 60 years, with beard, always smoking pipe/--ghost of the explorer, wears Dutch hat.
6. **Hubert Oosterhoudt**--part of farmer duo with Brom. Forthright, good-natured, a bit round. Male, 25 yrs
7. **Brom Dutcher**--part of farmer duo with Hubert. Thin, looks on the dark side of everything, superstitious. Male, 40 yrs
8. **Dame Anna Van Onderdonk/Rip Jr.**--cheerful and flirtatious young town lady, fashionable. Part of duo with Dame Rachel. Female, 20 yrs. /Rip's grown son in Act II. "He" should look (as much as is possible) like Rip looks in Act I, minus the hat.
9. **Ripje/Judy**--male/female child, 6-10 yrs. Ripe is Rip's son, Judy is the daughter he never meets. Can be played by one young actress.

(+) **Rip Van Winkle Jr.**--25 yrs. Rip's grown son in Act II. He appears only at the beginning of the 2nd Act. He can be played by Anna

## TIME AND ACTION:

This version of IBT is meant to be performed in a tavern or similar institution. The opening scene and several other scenes throughout are "bar scenes" in which the fact that the story is being told in a bar is acknowledged. In these scenes, actors are encouraged to improvise and involve the audience. Serving some version of flip in the intermission is encouraged. General scene settings are indicated--how (or whether) this can be communicated will depend on the performance space. Multiethnic casting is highly encouraged.

Act I takes place in 1795 in a small town on the Hudson River. Act II is 20 years later in the same town.

Act 1 PROLOGUE

*(ACTORS intermingle with bar audience, making conversation and learning names, occupations and other useful information. In the bar scenes, ACTORS can improvise ways to include their new acquaintances (e.g., bringing another Guinness for "Larry," "Sara, do you think the petticoat matches my dress?..." ) DAME ANNA is prone to flirting with the bartender or with guests. RIP is at a table or leaning against a post, asleep. Mountain Theme begins; as it begins to close, VEDDER steps to the center.)*

VEDDER

Welcome! Welcome--to "Impossible But True!" Make yourselves at home! We hope you'll sample the flip later on, but that's not until intermission. In the meantime, grab some ale, some wine, or maybe a little gin...

DAME RACHEL VEDDER

Nicolaus...don't pressure these young folk. Abstinence is good for the soul.

*(addressing the audience)*

My husband, even though he's been mayor for years, insists on acting like a bartender!

VEDDER

I am a bartender! That's how I've always known what's going on in this town.

*(SHE shifts primly. HE continues:)*

Very well. Bar's over there. Just a word of introduction: Ben here will also play Jonathan Doolittle in Act II,

*(BEN briefly dons a tai-cornered hat)*

my wife Rachel will often play my daughter, Jenny

*(RACHEL briefly removes her hat)*

and I, the most experienced and skilled actor in our company, will be playing Nicolaus Vedder and two other prominent roles:

*(Putting on a preacher's hat)*

the Reverend William Gansevoort, a revolutionary minister, and

*(switching to a Dutchman's hat)*

the fabled ghost of Henry Hudson, the explorer.

BROM

Nicolaus--you're behind the times. These days, you're a better actor when you're not acting. Like me. Brom

Dutcher. If I put on a hat...still: Brom Dutcher. I'm so entirely Brom Dutcher, I can't be anyone else.

HUBERT

That's acting.

VEDDER

*(grunts, not impressed)*

Time for a song from Rip. Rip?

*(RIP continues snoozing)*

REBECCA

Rip!!

RIP

What?! Oh! Oh. Hello, all you people!

*(HE blinks)*

What a wonderful thing it is to wake up in a bar!

*(trying to get his bearings)*

I'm Rip! So happy to meet you! And you all look friendly enough.

*(motioning to the bar)*

A round of flip for everyone! On the house!

VEDDER

*(in a low voice)*

Rip, you can't do that! You'll get us thrown out again!

*(signaling "no" to the bartender)*

DAME ANNA

*(leaning on the bar, to the bartender)*

Did they tell you about the last time?

VEDDER

Let's get this show started. The song, Rip.

RIP

I can't do the song yet! Ben's not here. And...I haven't had anything to drink.

ANNA

*(as SHE brings Rip a drink from the bar)*

Then tell us one of your stories! I'm Anna, everyone! Dame Anna Van Onderdonk.

RIP

A story...well, sure. I'll tell my Hudson tale. Even though it gets me into trouble every time....

*(to the pianist)*

Give me a few notes on that clavichord thing there

*(Music starts)*

Are we ready? So you all know who Henrick Hudson was, right? A great explorer who sailed across from the old country many years ago. He discovered our valley. And our great-grandfathers followed him here to settle down.

But ol' Henrick could never settle down. He had to keep exploring, until one day, way up in the far North, he disappeared. He sailed off and never came back. But when the sky gets dark, if you keep your eye on the clouds, sometimes you'll see his ship appear--sailing back to our valley to visit his favorite spot--the Bowling Green. It's a magical place he kept way up in the hills-- surrounded by tall trees. In this Bowling Green, everything is perfectly calm...until the game of ninepins begins.

*(Thunder rumblings from the piano)*

That, my friends--is Hudson and his crew right now, enjoying a ghostly game of ninepins. Now when he starts making noise, you'll want to find somewhere safe...or else ol' Hudson may decide to come down and get you!!

DAME RACHEL

What kind of nonsense is he putting in their minds? That's not a tale from the Good Book!

DAME ANNA

Heavens, no! But they're just harmless stories, Rachel...

VEDDER

*(stepping out)*

Not when he's talking about the king, they're not!

RIP

*(carefree, still to the bar)*

Oh, the king! Well who needs him? We can run our own affairs just fine! In fact, we colonists are the only ones who work. While their governors get rich! Why should anybody work to make somebody else rich? This is why we're going to make a revolution!

VEDDER

You'll do no such thing!

BROM

*(as BEN and REBECCA enter)*

Careful, Rip, we don't know who's listening. Those redcoats could be knocking on your door soon!

RIP

Let them come knocking, they can't catch me! They don't know these hills like Ben and I do!

*(grabs BEN and pulls HIM to HIS side)*

Besides, my uncle up north tells me they're already forming militias. Soon we'll be chasing those Brits off!

*(Hint of thunder from the piano)*

BEN

*(a bit concerned)*

We will?

BROM

*(interrupting)*

Or our town will go up in flames! That's what those redcoats do!

*(REBECCA whispers girlishly to ANNA, looking interested in RIP)*

HUBERT

Rip, you think we could fight the British Army?

RIP

Sure we ca--

VEDDER

Absolutely not!

*(stepping forward)*

Rip, we can't have this kind of talk. It's--

DAME RACHEL

IRRESPONSIBLE!

RIP

...NO IT'S NOT!

VEDDER, HUBERT and BROM  
UNWINNABLE!

RIP  
WE CAN FIGHT!

DAME RACHEL and DAME ANNA  
IT'S FOOLISHNESS!

VEDDER  
PREPOSTEROUS!

VEDDER, RACHEL, ANNA, HUBERT and BROM  
IMPOSSIBLE!

*(ALL freeze, RIP with his hand in the air, about  
to respond)*

REBECCA  
*(to the room)*  
Now that's the man I married!  
*(stepping over to RIP's side. Except for HER,  
THEY remain frozen until VEDDER speaks)*  
Irreverent. Interesting. Full of crazy ideas--like that  
one! I'm Rebecca Van Winkle and I--

VEDDER  
Young lady, it's past time for Rip to sing

REBECCA  
Check your script.

DAME ANNA  
She made some changes to the script

VEDDER  
What? You did? But--

REBECCA  
Listen, Washington Irving killed me off on page 11 of the  
short story. Rip Van Winkle comes back to his town, learns  
his wife is dead and lives happily ever after. But that  
won't cut it nowadays, am I right, ladies?

WOMEN  
Mm-hmm.

REBECCA

*(turning to the pianist)*

Don't you agree?

PIANIST

Look, I'm just the piano player.

REBECCA

I'll be damned if I get cut out of Act II, \_\_\_\_\_!

*(pianist's name)*

*(to the bar)*

So here's how this works for all the newcomers. We're doing this show in a tavern. We may ask you do some small things--shake something, make some animal noises, sing along.... Don't worry, it's all optional. If you want another drink, get up and head to the bar. Of course, if we're in the middle of a scene or a song, take the long way around. You don't want to walk into our scene and find yourself stuck back in 1775.

Most of you folk here have no idea what it was like back then. No electricity. No plumbing. Beer for breakfast...

RIPJE

Beer for kids!

REBECCA

Quiet, Ripje.

DAME ANNA

*(to the room)*

Your may think your life is hard. But:

*(resolutely)*

It's 1775. Dame Rebecca is baking bread.



*Scene 1 Music starts as WOMEN rearrange themselves to be sitting in a kitchen. REBECCA stands in front.)*

REBECCA

We'd draw the water from the well, chop the wood for the fire, milk the the cow, thresh the wheat, churn the butter...and on top of that--

DOUGH CAN BE DIFFICULT  
A WOMAN NEEDS TO KNOW HOW TO TREAT IT  
SOMETIMES YOU NEED A GENTLE TOUCH  
SOMETIMES YOU NEED TO BEAT IT  
WE PULL BREAD, SOFT AND WARM FROM THE OVEN  
IN THE MORNING'S EARLY LIGHT  
THEY'LL NEVER KNOW WHAT WE DO TO DOUGH  
TO MAKE THAT DOUGH DO RIGHT...

SMACK IT WITH YOUR FIST, BEAT IT WITH THE ROLLING PIN  
LET IT RISE, AND SLAP IT DOWN AGAIN  
SOMETIMES YOU HAVE TO BE TOUGH  
IF YOU WANT YOUR PASTRY TO PUFF!

WOMEN

SMASH IT WITH YOUR FIST, BEAT IT WITH YOUR ROLLING PIN  
LET IT RISE, AN' SMACK IT DOWN AGAIN  
DON'T BE AFRAID TO BE ROUGH  
BETTER TOO MUCH THAN NOT ENOUGH

REBECCA

WITH DOUGH...  
YOU HAVE TO FIGHT NOW AND THEN.

WOMEN

LIFE IS LABORIOUS  
CLIMBING UP A HILL THAT'S ONLY GETTING HIGHER  
SOME DAYS, YOU MAKE IT TO THE TOP  
OTHERS, YOU SLIP BACK IN THE MIRE  
BUT THAT BREAD, FRESH AND WARM FROM THE OVEN  
AS THE DAWN DISPELS THE NIGHT  
EACH MORNING BRINGS SWEET SMELLING THINGS  
TO FILL US WITH DELIGHT

JENNY

*(stepping over to REBECCA)*  
Rebecca, it's going to be a beautiful day today!  
*(SHE inhales deeply)*  
...but what is that smell?

REBECCA

Ohhhhh! He left his boots in the oven again!

DAME ANNA

Ahh--Dame Rebecca--you might want to know--your fence out here just toppled over.

REBECCA

I thought Rip fixed that piece of fence!

*(GANSEVOORT is rapping at the door as RIPJE runs in from the opposite side.)*

RIPJE

Mommy, can I go to Spook Rock with Steven today?

REBECCA

Why aren't you at school, Ripje?

*(more rapping)*

JENNY

*(peering out the window)*

Rebecca, I'm afraid your cow is heading for Mr. Dutcher's cabbage.

REBECCA

I don't have time for this!

*(opening the door)*

Reverend, could you take Ripje down to the school?

GANSEVOORT

I--of course, Dame Van Winkle. But I came to check on your husband. He hasn't been at militia practice for several days now.

REBECCA

He hasn't..? Then where has he been?!...Ohh, I'm gonna learn to shoot that gun myself!

GANSEVOORT

That's the spirit! We need some men like you!

*(GANSEVOORT takes the unwilling RIPJE by the shoulder and leads HIM offstage.)*

REBECCA

Rrrrrrr!

MEN CAN BE MADDENING  
LIFE IS LABORIOUS  
AND DOUGH...

WOMEN

DOUGH...YOU  
SMACK IT WITH YOUR FIST, BEAT IT WITH THE ROLLING PIN  
LET IT RISE, THEN SLAP IT DOWN AGAIN  
SOMETIMES YOU HAVE TO BE TOUGH  
IF YOU WANT YOUR PASTRY TO PUFF! YOU--

WOMEN

*(in canon)*

POUND IT WITH YOUR PALM, SLAP IT IN THE STEWING POT  
DIG YOUR FINGERS IN AND GIVE IT ALL YOU'VE GOT  
DON'T BE AFRAID TO BE ROUGH  
BETTER TOO MUCH THAN NOT ENOUGH  
WITH DOUGH--  
WITH LIFE--  
WITH MEN--

YOU HAVE TO FIGHT NOW AND THEN  
WE DO WHAT WE CAN

REBECCA

YOU HAVE TO FIGHT NOW AND THEN.

Scene 2

*RIP and BEN sit under a tree, preparing to fish.)*

RIP

Ben, it's going to be a beautiful day!

GRAB A WORM IN THE DIRT  
PUT THE CRITTER ON A HOOK  
TIE YOUR STRING TO A POLE  
DROP IT IN THE BROOK

THEN YOU WAIT FOR THE FISH TO COME...

BEN

I thought Mother would never let me get away! Think we'll get anything?

RIP

I think the big one's gonna bite.

BUT SUPPOSIN' THE FISH DON'T COME...  
WHY SHOULD IT BOTHER ME?

Ben, we are right where we oughta be--

'CAUSE THE SUN'S SHINING DOWN  
ON THE STREAM AND THE TREE  
ON THE FISHES SWIMMING BY  
AND IT'S JUST YOU AND ME  
AS WE'RE WATCHING THE WORLD GO BY  
UNDER A CLEAR BLUE SKY

WHILE DOWN BELOW  
THERE'S WORRY AND STRIFE  
THERE'S ONLY SO LONG  
YOU CAN LIVE THAT LIFE

WHEN YOUR TROUBLES COME  
LOOKIN' FOR YOU  
SOMETIMES THE BEST THING TO DO  
IS GO FISH

BEN

You're right. Every time I finish a chore, there's two more I haven't done!

RIP

The taxes are past due, the fence is about to fall, and the corn didn't grow. But we have bigger things to deal with up here.

BEN

Right!

*(pause, RIP scans water)*

We do?

RIP

Did you see that?!

BEN

See what?

RIP

The water churning over there. I've seen it twice now.

IT'S A FISH SO BIG  
WE COULD EAT FOR A WEEK  
IT'S THE PRINCE OF THE POND  
KING OF THE CREEK

AND WE'RE GOING TO CATCH THAT FISH

BEN

You know, some people say you...made up this fish--

RIP

LET THEM SAY WHAT THEY WISH  
IT DOESN'T BOTHER ME

Problem is, he's smart. He sees the string attached, and he's not ready to be hooked yet.

HE'LL MAKE US SIT'N WAIT  
WHILE HE NIBBLES AROUND THAT BAIT

THEN GLIDES ON BY  
NEVER TAKES THAT BITE  
STAYS WHERE THE WATER IS  
CLEAR AND BRIGHT  
HE SWIMS ALL DAY  
AND FROLICS ALL NIGHT

HAPPY AND FREE

MAYBE I SHOULD HAVE BEEN  
SOMEONE WHO SAILS THE SEAS  
WANDERS THE WORLD AS I PLEASE  
NOTHING TO TIE ME DOWN

COULD HAVE BEEN SOMEONE  
EXPLORING THE LAND OUT WEST  
MAKING A MAP OF THE NEW FRONTIER  
BUT I'M HERE...

AND DOWN BELOW  
THERE'S TROUBLE AND STRIFE

BEN

AN ANGRY MOTHER

RIP

AN ANGRIER WIFE

RIP and BEN

AND THEY'VE GOT PLANS  
FOR THE REST OF YOUR LIFE  
WHAT CAN WE DO?

RIP

WELL SOMETIMES A MAN NEEDS TO FIGHT  
TO STAND WHEN HE KNOWS HE IS RIGHT  
TO FIGHT TO BE FREE  
SO JUST STICK WITH ME

RIP and BEN

WE'LL FEARLESSLY ENTER THE FRAY!

RIP

BUT THAT'S NOT GOING TO HAPPEN TODAY  
SO LET'S FISH

BEN

I'm with you.

*(Music buttons. A moment passes and nothing happens. Music starts again.)*

RIP

This could take a while.

*(Another moment. Music stops.)*

RIP

How's that new girlfriend of yours?

BEN

Huh?

RIP

I saw Vedder's daughter giving you the eye again....

BEN

Oh, Jenny? She's great. But she's not my girlfriend.

RIP

Why not?

BEN

Cause...*(sighs)*

I can't...I, I can't talk...whenever she's...uh...

RIP

You should ask her to dance tonight. You won't have to talk. I'm going to head down and...visit with Rebecca for a moment. I can meet you at the tavern at noon and show you a few steps. We're already missing the militia practice anyway.

BEN

The militia practice! I'm late!

*(HE scrambles to gather his things and then runs off.)*

RIP

Ben?

*(no answer)*

Ah well, guess it's time to face the music. The dark and foreboding music.

*(glancing over towards the piano player. The music becomes foreboding and builds until REBECCA speaks)*

REBECCA

*(appearing with arms folded)*

Where have you been?

RIP

Well, we were out late at the tavern last night--then I had militia--

*(realizing SHE knows)*

well, since I missed militia practice, I thought I would try to catch some fish for my little cabbage...

REBECCA

Rip...

RIP

My sweet little radish?

REBECCA

You'll get nowhere calling me a vegetable. Did you at least bring back some fish?

RIP

I almost had the big one this time--I could sense him rootin' around down there at the bottom...

REBECCA

Rip Van Winkle, I don't need your imaginary fish! I need a real fish! And what about the cow?

RIP

I didn't--sense a cow...

REBECCA

Our cow! Gone again! Look at the fence! Look at this mess! I cooked your boots! I ruined the puff-paste!

RIP

*(backing away)*

Rebecca, I'll be back when you've calmed down.

REBECCA

Not tonight, you won't!

*(flinging a pile of clothes toward RIP.)*

RIP

Buttercups--



REBECCA

Flowers won't cut it either! Don't you see how much I have  
to do? And you're useless!

*(a blanket follows)*

Useless! Go sleep in the woods!

*(SHE addresses the bar:)*

Am I being unreasonable?

OTHER WOMEN

Well, maybe...

The woods are a bit chilly now...

I don't know, Rebecca...

*(Chord)*

REBECCA

WITH MEN

YOU HAVE TO FIGHT NOW AND THEN

YOU DO WHAT YOU CAN

BUT YOU HAVE TO FIGHT NOW AND THEN.

*Scene 3* HUBERT and VEDDER sit inside the tavern, listening intently to BROM. Two long clay pipes sit on the table in front of them.

BROM

*(somewhat dramatically)*

We've got to keep it quiet. But that's what I heard.  
Invade Canada!

HUBERT

*(loudly)*

How can we invade Canada?

OTHERS *(immediately)*

Shhhhhh!

HUBERT

*(more quietly)*

How can we invade Canada? We're not even a country  
ourselves. Are we?

VEDDER

Exactly. We're part of the British empire. So is Canada.  
We'd be invading ourselves. A stupid idea.

BROM

But we want to get rid of the Brits. Maybe they do, too!

HUBERT

Maybe they'll help us make the revolution!

*(VEDDER gives HIM the eye)*

You know, like Rip is always talking about...

VEDDER

They've got more sense than that! Who are you kidding?  
You'll never change the world--what you need to do is learn  
how to live in it.

BROM

The word is: the troops are on the way up the Hudson as we  
speak, looking for volunteers to join them!

HUBERT

Well, I say, lotsa luck to'em. But I've got a good crop  
of rutabagas I need to keep an eye on here. And somethin's  
been after my cabbage...

VEDDER

*(picking up his pipe)*

Nobody here is crazy enough to run off and invade Canada!  
I'm a sensible, God-fearing man--when I hear something  
unsettling like that,..I have to pull out my pipe and think  
on it a while.

HUBERT

Exactly.

*(Music starts. HE reaches for a pipe, but BROM  
has already picked up the other one. VEDDER and  
BROM puff on their pipes.)*

VEDDER and BROM

Hmmmmmm

HUBERT

Brother Brom. That's my pipe.

*(HUBERT waits until BOTH set their pipes back  
down:)*

HUBERT

Gentlemen--what if something "unsettling" is just what we  
need right now?

*(The MEN consider, then reach for their pipes.  
This time, HUBERT is ready and nabs the pipe,  
leaving BROM empty-handed.)*

BROM

You took my pipe!

HUBERT

No...

*(HE holds up the pipe)*

THIS PIPE  
THIS TRUSTY PIPE

WAS A GIFT FROM MY  
DEAR DEPARTED DAD

VEDDER

Gentlemen...

BROM

YOU'RE WRONG  
COMPLETELY WRONG  
I'VE HAD THIS LOYAL PIPE  
SINCE I WAS JUST A LAD

HUBERT

MY FRIEND,  
I CONTEND--  
LOOK CLOSELY AND YOU'LL SEE  
IT'S MADE OUT OF CLAY FROM THE BANKS  
OF THE DEAR OLD ZUIDER ZEE

BROM

He's making this up!

HUBERT

THAT PIPE

BROM

RIDICULOUS

HUBERT

BELONGS

BROM

PREPOSTEROUS

HUBERT

TO ME!

BROM

IMPOSSIBLE

*(Both HUBERT and BROM are gripping the pipe)*

VEDDER

Sit down!

*(Music out. BROM reluctantly lets go and BOTH sit down.)*

VEDDER

Let's try to stick to the topic?

BROM

What topic?

*(Music returns to initial vamp)*

VEDDER

I was saying, none of us are crazy enough to go running off--

RIP

*(loudly entering with a handful of clothes, a blanket and his rifle.)*

Good morning, good morning! Though I'm off to a bad start.

VEDDER

She threw you out again.

RIP

It's been a rough season. The fish aren't biting, the corn's only a foot high...she says I'm useless.

OTHERS

No/nahhhh/of course not!

VEDDER

You're a good man, Rip. You'll get something done soon.

HUBERT

*(helpfully)*

If I had any use for you, I'd definitely give you work on my farm!

VEDDER

Speaking of useless, Brom here was just feeding us rumors about a harebrained expedition to invade Canada.

RIP

I've heard all about it! And there's more. I was up at my uncle's in Kingston last week. They're saying our forces are building a vessel that will secretly blow up the British fleet!

HUBERT

Secretly? Won't they know?

RIP

*(dramatically)*

Well, it's a ship, but it travels under the water.

*(Music starts.)*

Loaded with weapons. Like an armored...trout. It approaches the British ship from below, plants its explosives and then swims away. Ker-blam! They never know what hit them!

HUBERT

A boat that floats--under the water!

ALL

Hmmmm.

BROM

Well, that's a bit unsettling.

VEDDER

*(standing up)*

No,

THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE

RIP

BUT IT'S TRUE  
YOU JUST DON'T KNOW  
WHAT OUR ENGINEERS CAN DO

VEDDER

ON THE TAPPAN ZEE  
OR ON THE ZUIDER ZEE

NO ONE'S GOING TO FLOAT  
IN AN UNDERWATER BOAT,  
AND YOUR TROUT WILL NOT DEFEAT  
THE ENTIRE BRITISH FLEET!

BROM

*(also standing up)*

AND THAT PIPE'S STILL MY PIPE, I REPEAT

BROM and VEDDER

IT'S ALL IMPOSSIBLE!  
IMPOSSIBLE--

HUBERT and RIP

BUT IT'S TRUE

*(DAME ANNA and DAME RACHEL enter downstage, arm  
in arm. MEN continue discussing.)*

DAME ANNA

It's a giant chain! It's supposed to hang across the  
Hudson River and stop any ships from passing.

DAME RACHEL

Oh, that's ridiculous! You can't chain a river! Where do  
you hear these things?

DAME ANNA

Oh, I know all about what's going on. There's big things  
coming! Why, I was just talking to Rip Van Winkle and he  
was telling me--

DAME RACHEL

Ahh! Rip Van Winkle!  
*(shaking her head)*

My dear..

THAT MAN  
IS FULL OF STORIES  
BUT NONE OF THEM ARE TRUE

DAME ANNA

SAYS YOU  
I BEG TO DIFFER  
FOR I HEARD THE MAN EXPLAIN  
HIS CHAIN

DAME RACHEL

MY DEAR  
I FEAR  
THAT YOU HAVEN'T GOT A CLUE WHAT IS TRUE

DAME ANNA

YES I DO!

DAME RACHEL NO YOU DON'T!

DAME ANNA

YES I DO!

DAME RACHEL  
NO YOU DON'T, NO YOU DON'T!

DAME ANNA  
BUT I DO! AND FURTHERMORE  
I SAY THE PIPE BELONGS TO YOU  
*(pointing dramatically at BROM)*

*(Pause)*

DAME RACHEL, HUBERT, VEDDER  
THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE

DAME ANNA, BROM  
BUT IT'S TRUE

DAME RACHEL *(to BROM)*  
THE PIPE'S NOT YOURS!

HUBERT *(to DAME RACHEL)*  
AND SHE HASN'T GOT A CLUE!

DAME RACHEL  
IT'S A FANTASY

HUBERT  
IT'S FROM THE ZUIDER ZEE

DAME ANNA  
WE CAN MAKE THE RIVER FREE  
THEN WE'LL LOCK IT WITH A KEY!

BROM  
LOOK--IT'S THE TRUTH  
HERE'S THE IMPRINT OF MY TOOTH!

ALL  
SO YOU SAY, SO YOU SAY, SO YOU SAY  
SO YOU SAY, SO YOU SAY, SO YOU SAY

BROM  
SO I SAY  
WELL, IT'S TRUE

WHAT YOU SAY IS IMPOSSIBLE  
EVERY WORD YOU SAY IS IMPOSSIBLE

IMPOSSIBLE IMPOSSIBLE  
IMPOSSIBLE IMPOSSIBLE



IMPOSSIBLE IMPOSSIBLE  
IMPOSSIBLE IMPOSSIBLE

*(VEDDER steps in the center)*

VEDDER	DAME RACHEL and BROM
Your little militia can never	IMPOSSIBLE
fight the British Army!	IMPOSSIBLE
They're the best in the world.	IMPOSSIBLE
You're a bunch of farmers!	IMPOSSIBLE

RIP

But wait, see--

VEDDER

What? Have you got another secret weapon?

RIP

*(stepping into the center)*

Well--you clearly haven't heard about the revolutionary magnet yet.

*(music changes)*

HUBERT

*(with interest)*

Magnet?

RIP

Our engineers are making a giant magnet. When the battle starts, we'll point it at the enemy and cl-l-l-l-l-lank!-- we've got all their weapons.

VEDDER

Oh, that's ridiculous!

RIP

*(leaning closer to DAME ANNA)*

Maybe their buttons too!

DAME ANNA

Ooooh!

HUBERT

Amazing. Magnets!

RIP  
WE'RE HANGING CHAINS ON THE RIVER

HUBERT  
WITH OUR UNDERWATER BOATS

RIP  
WE'LL STRIP AWAY THEIR MUSKETS

DAME ANNA and RIP  
AND THE BUTTONS FROM THEIR COATS

DAME RACHEL  
I don't believe it!

RIP and DAME ANNA  
BUT IT'S TRUE!

HUBERT  
THEY'LL BE NAKED WHEN WE'RE THROUGH!

ALL  
IT'S HARD TO KNOW  
WHAT TO DO

ANNA, RIP, BEN, HUBERT  
WHEN THEY SAY IMPOSSIBLE

DAME RACHEL, BEN, BROM, VEDDER  
AND THEY SAY TRUE

RIP  
(to VEDDER)  
THE WAR IS DESTINY!

HUBERT  
(to ANNA)  
THIS PIPE WAS MADE FOR ME!

ALL  
ARE YOU SURE, VERY SURE,  
THAT YOU KNOW WHAT YOU KNOW

DAME RACHEL, BEN, VEDDER, BROM  
WHEN THE PERSON TO YOUR RIGHT SAYS

DAME ANNA, RIP, HUBERT  
YOU'RE WRONG, IT ISN'T SO

ALL  
SO YOU SAY, SO YOU SAY, SO YOU SAY  
SO YOU SAY, SO YOU SAY, SO YOU SAY

DID YOU SAY IT'S IMPOSSIBLE?  
DOES IT SEEM IMPOSSIBLE TO YOU?

WHO CAN SAY WHAT'S IMPOSSIBLE  
WHEN THE WORLD IS DIFFERENT EVERY DAY?  
WHO'S TO SAY?  
IS IT SO?  
ARE YOU SURE?  
WHO'S TO KNOW?  
IS IT IMPOSSIBLE TO TELL  
IF IT'S IMPOSSIBLE?

DAME ANNA and DAME RACHEL  
OR IF IT'S TRUE

*(RIP and BEN down THEIR mugs of flip as the DAMES exit. VEDDER discreetly switches hats to become GANSEVOORT, who strides resolutely up to the table.)*

GANSEVOORT  
Gentlemen, I've organized the militia because Destiny has called upon us to serve a great cause. And just this morning--I've been informed that General Schuyler and a troop of men will be passing through our town on a daring campaign. They've asked us for volunteers--scouts--to assist in their passage.

HUBERT  
Volunteers?  
*(a moment of silence)*  
...What campaign?

GANSEVOORT  
It's a closely kept secret. But if we succeed, this could shift the whole battlefield to our advantage.

MEN

*(exchanging knowing looks)*

Hmmmmmm...

HUBERT

Well, as Nicolaus was just saying....

RIP *(interrupting)*

I'll do it!

MEN *(including GANSEVOORT)*

You?

RIP

Yeah, me. Might as well--

*(holding up his clothes and blankets)*

got nowhere to sleep. And this'll show her.

*(putting HIS arm around BEN)*

Ben'll come too, won't you?

BEN

Huh?

RIP

C'mon. We'll be the best scouts they could get!

BEN

Well...I...

RIP

*(to BEN)*

The ladies will love you for it!

BEN

*(After a moment, to GANSEVOORT)*

I'll do it!

GANSEVOORT

*(unsure of how to react)*

Well!

*(after a moment, moving decisively)*

I'll have to communicate this to the General right away!

*HE looks down and sees the disputed pipe,  
forgotten on the table.)*

GANSEVOORT

Ah, I wondered where I left this pipe.

*(HE slips the pipe in HIS jacket and exits as BROM and HUBERT stare. JENNY enters, peering around the stage in search of REBECCA's cow. GANSEVOORT switches hats and becomes VEDDER, stepping behind the bar.)*

RIP

Ben, it'll be easy for us. We know these hills like the back of our hand.

BEN

*(in a whisper)*

Shh. She's here!

RIP

Who's here?

*(turning around)*

Oh, Jenny. Hey--now's your chance! Invite her to the dance!

BEN

Not in her father's tavern.

*(BEN stands)*

I'm going home--oof!

*(colliding with JENNY as HE turns.)*

BEN

Ah--sorry!

JENNY

Oh, hello! Sorry...

*(SHE stands awkwardly)*

VEDDER

Jenny, is anything wrong?

JENNY

Um...I'm just looking for a cow.

VEDDER

In my tavern?

JENNY

Well, Rip's cow escaped--

RIP

No, no, she just strolled off for a bit--

BROM

That cow better not be strolling through my cabbage!

JENNY

*(to RIP, who has put his feet up)*

Aren't you worried?

RIP

She's having a drink down at the river. Oh! But Jenny! Listen--are you coming to the dance tonight?

JENNY

I have to. I'm helping Father organize it.

RIP

You know, Ben and I are about to carry out a special military mission.

JENNY

Military?

RIP

Yes. We'll be scouting with General Schuyler's army. But before we're off, I'm showing Ben some dance steps--maybe you could let him try them out with you at the dance tonight?

BEN

*(aghast, whispering)*

Rip!

JENNY

*(turning to BEN)*

Oh, why didn't you say something? I love to dance! I-- guess I'll see you tonight, then!

*(SHE curtsies playfully to BEN and exits.)*

RIP

*(to BEN)*

See?

BEN

*(pulls RIP aside, with clenched teeth)*

Rip, are you crazy? I have no idea what to do! I'm going to look like a toad!

RIP

Just believe in yourself! She'll turn you into a prince!

BEN

That's a frog. A toad just stays a toad.

RIP

Come on, she knows we're going off to battle. Women can't resist that!

*(HE jumps up)*

Let me show you a secret.

*(Music starts. RIP looks around, then pulls BEN out toward the center)*

RIP

Do this:

TAKE HER BY THE HAND

BEN

Huh?

RIP

Pretend I'm her.

YOU CAN TAKE A LITTLE BOW  
DANCING'S REALLY EASY

BEN

Not for me.

RIP

I'M GONNA SHOW YOU HOW  
WALK TWO STEPS TO THE RIGHT  
PAUSE - THEN WALK TWO STEPS TO THE LEFT  
SEE - THAT'S ALL YOU HAVE TO DO  
TO START DANCING

BEN

That's the secret?

Just try it. RIP

TAKE HER BY THE HAND BEN

Easy...easy... RIP

*(doubtfully)* BEN  
Then I bow?

They like that. RIP

All right. But BEN  
I'M NO GOOD AT DANCING

Look-- RIP  
YOU CAN DO IT NOW  
WALK TWO STEPS TO THE RIGHT  
*(Ben steps on Rip's foot)*  
Ow!

Told you! BEN

THEN WALK TWO STEPS TO THE LEFT--SEE? RIP

THAT'S ALL I HAVE TO DO? BEN

Right! RIP  
NOW YOU'RE DANCING

I am?...Hey, I've got it! BEN  
*(RIP and BEN start to dance together.)*

Here's the secret: RIP



WOMEN LOVE TO DANCE  
IT'S WHAT THEY'RE WAITING FOR  
DON'T MAKE IT FAST OR FANCY  
JUST STEP OUT ON THE FLOOR

THEN YOU DANCE  
DON'T BE WORRIED YOU MIGHT DO IT WRONG  
YOU CAN FIX IT AS YOU GO ALONG  
ALL YOU NEED TO DO IS KEEP DANCING

AND ANYONE CAN DANCE  
DON'T MIND WHAT PEOPLE SAY  
JUST TAKE A LITTLE CHANCE  
LET IT CARRY YOU AWAY  
ANYTHING YOU WANT  
YOU'LL FIND THAT EVERYTHING YOU WANT  
COULD BE THERE WAITING IN YOUR ARMS  
IF YOU WILL DANCE

They're just waiting for you to ask...

YOU CAN SPIN HER 'ROUND AND 'ROUND  
THERE'S NOTHING LIKE IT THAT I'VE FOUND  
LET HER FEET LIFT OFF THE GROUND  
LET YOURSELF GO--AND DANCE

BEN

TWO STEPS TO THE RIGHT  
THEN IT'S TWO STEPS TO THE...

RIP

Right. No! Left!

BEN

TWO STEPS TO THE RIGHT

RIP

Then the left....

BEN

THEN IT'S TWO STEPS TO THE RIGHT

RIP

TONIGHT YOU'LL SEE, THEY'LL SAY "YES" WHEN YOU THINK  
THEY'LL SAY "NO"

WHERE THEY MIGHT HAVE SAID "STOP" THEY'LL SAY "GO"  
YOU'RE THE MAN OF THEIR DREAMS WHEN YOU'RE DANCING

RIP and BEN

AND ANYONE CAN DANCE  
IT'S NOT SO HARD TO DO  
GO ON AND TAKE A CHANCE  
AND LET HER TAKE A CHANCE WITH YOU

ANYTHING YOU WANT  
YOU'LL SEE THAT  
EVERYTHING YOU WANT  
COULD BE THERE  
WAITING IN YOUR ARMS  
IF...YOU WILL DANCE

*(THEY finish elegantly, and do not see  
GANSEVOORT, who has entered and stopped in front  
of THEM.)*

GANSEVOORT

Gentlemen...

*(RIP and BEN quickly separate)*

I've informed General Schulyer that you'll be joining them.

*(RIP and BEN are silent for a moment)*

BEN

When will they come?

GANSEVOORT

Probably sometime tomorrow. Possibly sooner. You'll hear  
the church bell ring. Be prepared to depart immediately as  
they won't be stopping in town.

*(HE exits.)*

RIP

*(loudly)*

I'm ready right now! Rebecca's already packed my things!

BEN

I should go home and...tell Mom. And get stuff ready...

RIP

Just get yourself cleaned up--you've got a girl waiting to  
dance with you.

Impossible But True--In A Tavern

BEN

What about you? And Rebecca?

RIP

I'll see her later tonight when she's calmed down a bit.  
She's gonna find out that I do what I say I'm gonna do!  
*(THEY exit.)*

*[Before this scene, ACTORS can recruit a few audience members to be the COW when cued.]*

Scene 4 *(BEN is pantomiming a dance with a tree limb. JENNY steps out and sees BEN.)*

JENNY

Hello?

BEN

*(embarrassed)*

Oh, Jenny! Ah,...what brings you here?

JENNY

I was going to ask you the same thing--

*(BOTH speak at the same time)*

BEN: I was standing here--

JENNY: Coming to check on--

JENNY

looking for Rip's cow.

BEN

*(laughs nervously)*

Oh, the cow. ...

JENNY

So, are you ready to dance tonight?

BEN

Actually, I was headed home, because Rip and I--

JENNY *(interrupting)*

Were practicing?

BEN

Huh? Oh, practicing--yeah, we were.

JENNY

You know, I can show you, too.

*(Music starts.)*

Impossible But True--In A Tavern

BEN

*(still motioning to leave)*

Ah, ...OK, sure, well, I'll see you tonight-

JENNY

I mean, now.

BEN

Now? Out here in the woods?

JENNY

*(approaching)*

Do you know how to start?

BEN

Uh, let's see...two steps to the--

JENNY

I think you put your hand here.

BEN

Oh.

*(taken aback)*

And--we do this?

*(successfully turning her)*

JENNY

Oooh!

BEN

Then we do...this!

*(not as successful...)*

JENNY

Well, maybe not that...

*(They pause, then drop arms, reluctantly.)*

JENNY *(at same time)*

I like how you...

GO AHEAD

You're so funny when you

GO AHEAD

BEN *(at same time)*

OK, it needs some work...

NO, YOU GO AHEAD

I didn't mean to inter-

NO, YOU GO AHEAD

BEN and JENNY

IT'S SO ODD HOW BOTH OF US START TO TALK AT THE SAME  
TIME...



BEN & JENNY

THINK OF ALL THOSE THINGS  
THE ORDINARY THINGS  
OF ALL THE STUPID THINGS THAT WE DO  
THEY WOULDN'T BE AS STUPID--WITH YOU

JENNY

MAYBE YOU COULD VISIT ME AT  
CHURCH, IF THE PASTOR AGREES

BEN

MAYBE WE WOULD SIT ON A PEW

BEN and JENNY

IN THE BACK, TOUCHING KNEES

BEN

I'D DO ALL MY CHORES  
LOOKING FORWARD TO HER SMILE

JENNY

I'D DO ALL MY CHORES  
AND I'D JUST SMILE

CHOPPING ALL THE WOOD  
I WOULD DO IT ALL AND BE

WASHING ALL THE CLOTHES  
I'D BE

BEN and JENNY

THINKING OF HIM/HER ALL THE WHILE

SUDDENLY I'M FULL OF SOMETHING  
*(THEY separate, singing individually)*

BEN

I'M SURE THAT I'M FEELING SOMETHING

JENNY

CAN IT BE?

BEN

IT CAN'T BE TRUE

BEN and JENNY

SHE/HE DOESN'T FEEL LIKE ME...  
*(turning to each other)*  
DO YOU?

JENNY

I'M SO GLAD THAT YOU CAME BY

BEN

Yeah, me too!

BEN and JENNY

NOW WHAT DO WE DO?

JENNY

LET'S KEEP WALKING

BEN

LET'S KEEP WALKING

JENNY

*(turning suddenly and stopping)*

OR WE COULD STOP-

BEN

OR WE-

*(bumping into her)*

Oop! Sorry!

JENNY

*(not moving away)*

IT'S NICE TO BE CLOSE TO YOU

BEN and JENNY

ISN'T IT SO STRANGE

HOW EVERYTHING CAN CHANGE

JENNY

AND ALL AT ONCE IT FEELS LIKE A DREAM

BEN and JENNY

JUST A LITTLE WALK BY THE STREAM

JENNY

AND I LIKE BEING HERE

BEN

AND YOU'RE STANDING SO NEAR

JENNY

WITH YOU

BEN

TO ME, AND



Impossible But True--In A Tavern

JENNY  
WHAT WERE YOU GOING TO SAY?

BEN  
IT'S A REALLY NICE--DON'T KNOW...

JENNY  
THAT'S TRUE  
*(grabbing BEN's hands)*  
DON'T LET GO

BEN  
GO...WHERE?

JENNY  
GO AHEAD

BEN  
YOUR HAIR...

JENNY  
YOU GO AHEAD

BEN  
NO, YOU GO A-  
*(JENNY kisses BEN)*

JENNY                      and                      BEN  
*(fast and chaotically)*

WAS THAT RIGHT?  
DID I DO IT RIGHT?  
DO I LOOK OK?  
WAS IT ALL TOO FAST?

I'VE BEEN KISSED!  
DID I KISS HER BACK?  
I CAN'T FEEL MY LIPS!  
CAN WE TRY AGAIN?

WHAT DOES HE THINK?  
WHAT SHOULD I SAY?  
WHAT DID HE SAY?

WHAT HAPPENED TO MY LIPS?  
I LOVE HER HAIR  
WHAT SHOULD I SAY?  
WHAT DID SHE SAY?

COW  
Moooo!

*(Startled, BEN and JENNY separate)*

BEN and JENNY

Oh...

JENNY

*(regaining her composure, upbeat)*

We found it! It's Rebecca's cow...we have to bring it back...

BEN

I'll take her up to their farm.

JENNY

So--are you really going off with the militia?

BEN

Yeah, I guess. I wish you could come.

JENNY

Maybe I could visit?

BEN

I think it's far.

COW

*(starting to wander off)*

Mooo!

BEN

Uh-oh, there she goes. Look, I'll meet you tonight at the dance.

JENNY

OK, I'll be waiting.

*(neither of THEM leaves)*

COW

*(further off)*

Moooo.

BEN

Bye!

*(THEY exit opposite sides)*

Scene 5 (*Evening. Thunder. Center stage. RIP is standing alone, with his pack at his feet. Music starts. RIP addresses bar audience.*)

RIP

Life flies by. Whether you know what you're doing...or not. So if history reaches in and grabs you, what do you do? You might not even know your big moment is here. They don't write down these stories until it's all over and done with. Meanwhile, we're all living from one day to the next--

HIGH ABOVE THE TOWN  
THE LEAVES ARE COMING DOWN  
RED AND GOLD UP ON THE HILLSIDE  
FALLING AS YOU LOOK  
PAGES TURNING IN A BOOK  
ALL THE COLORS ON THE HILLSIDE

AND THERE'S SILVER IN THE AIR  
AND THE WINTER'S 'ROUND THE CORNER

SO SING, RAISE YOUR FIDDLE AND YOUR BOW  
THERE'S STILL A LITTLE TIME FOR US TO BORROW  
WE'RE OFF TO WHEREVER WE MUST GO  
BUT THERE'S A LITTLE TIME BEFORE TOMORROW  
NO ONE KNOWS IF WE'LL BE HERE TOMORROW  
LET'S GO DANCING  
TODAY

WHILE THERE'S MUSIC I DON'T CARE  
IF THE WINTER'S 'ROUND THE CORNER.

*(RIPJE runs across stage to RIP as scale ascends in music)*

RIPJE

Daddy!

RIP

Hey little man!

*(Thunder rumbles.)*

What's that sound I'm hearing?

RIPJE

That's Henrick Hudson, playing ninepins!

RIP

That's right! Nothing to be scared of!

RIPJE

And when he rolls the ball, then--

RIP

Ka-boom!

*(sudden loud thunderclap as RIP grabs HIM close.  
RIPJE laughs.)*

RIPJE

Daddy, will you take me fishing for my birthday?

RIP

Hey, your birthday's coming up, isn't it? Of course I will! But it may have to wait until I get back from a little trip I'm taking. Tell you what--your mother's probably looking for you right now--better get going!

*(Fiddle plays a chord. RIPJE runs off. HUBERT,  
BROM and BEN enter and sit behind RIP. BEN has a  
large knapsack.)*

RIP

*(turning to the MEN behind HIM)*

Why so quiet? Aren't we supposed to be having a party here? Where's the flip?

VEDDER

*(arriving with a pitcher)*

Hold your horses! And bring me some eggs!

*(DAME RACHEL and DAME ANNA arrive. DAME ANNA  
carries a big plate of honeycakes.)*

DAME ANNA

Boys, I made honeycakes.

*(SHE smiles sweetly. The MEN jump up and  
surround HER.)*

MEN

*(lustily)*

Mmmmmmm!

*(Fiddling vamp starts.)*

RIP

Dame Anna, I'd do anything for a bite of your honeycakes!

DAME ANNA

*(pulling away playfully)*

Oh, would you? I'll take you up on that!

HUBERT

Well, I'd do anything, too, Anna!

DAME RACHEL

Anna, don't encourage this!

RIP

WHAT WOULD I DO  
WHAT WOULD I DO  
FOR A PIECE OF DAME  
ANNA VAN  
ONDERDONK'S HONEY CAKE?

DAME VAN ONDERDONK

*(laughing)*

You men make such promises!

*(She teases him with a cake, leading him around the dance area. RIP grabs HUBERT and enlists HIM in the song.)*

EVERYONE

WHAT WOULD YOU DO  
WHAT WOULD YOU DO

RIP

FOR A PIECE OF THAT

HUBERT

A SLICE OF THAT

RIP

A BIT OF THAT

RIP and HUBERT

A BITE OF THAT HONEY CAKE?

RIP

I WOULD SAY, "PRETTY PLEASE"  
SPEND THE DAY ON MY KNEES

HUBERT

JUMP UP AND HOWL AT THE MOON

RIP and HUBERT

I'D DO ANYTHING SHE WANTS ME TO  
I'M A SLAVE TO THE WOMAN WHO GIVES ME A BIT  
A BITE OF THAT HONEY CAKE

VEDDER

*(to the bar)*

WHAT WOULD YOU DO  
WHAT WOULD YOU DO  
FOR A PIECE OF DAME  
ANNA VAN  
ONDERDONK'S HONEY CAKE?

ANNA

My cakes are the finest!

EVERYONE

WHAT WOULD YOU DO  
WHAT WOULD YOU DO  
FOR A PIECE OF THAT  
A SLICE OF THAT  
A BIT OF THAT  
A BITE OF THAT HONEY CAKE?

RIP

I USED TO BE SLEEPYHEAD  
NOW I'D LEAP OUT OF BED  
HARD TO BELIEVE, BUT IT'S TRUE!  
I'D DO ANYTHING SHE WANTS ME TO

EVERYONE

HE'S A SLAVE TO THE WOMAN  
WHO GIVES HIM A BIT  
A BITE OF THAT HONEYCAKE!

*(RIP and HUBERT dance with DAME ANNA. OTHERS join in. JENNY arrives and steps out to the center to dance with BEN.)*

BEN

TAKE HER BY THE HAND  
THEN YOU TAKE A LITTLE BOW

ALL (*except BEN*)

DON'T BE SCARED OF DANCING

BEN

NO, I CAN DO IT NOW

OTHERS

WALK TWO STEPS TO THE RIGHT...  
PAUSE -

BEN

THEN WALK TWO STEPS TO THE LEFT

OTHERS

SEE, THAT'S ALL YOU HAVE TO DO

BEN and JENNY

NOW WE'RE DANCING...DANCING...

OTHERS

SING, RAISE YOUR FIDDLE AND YOUR BOW  
(*Sky darkens, thunder*)

BEN and JENNY

WE'LL GO SPINNING 'ROUND AND 'ROUND

OTHERS

YOU'RE OFF TO WHEREVER YOU WILL GO

BEN and JENNY

'TILL OUR FEET LIFT OFF THE GROUND

ALL

AND TOMORROW, WELL, WHO CAN EVER KNOW?  
LET'S GO DANCING  
LET'S GO DANCING--TODAY

(*Suddenly a church bell is ringing. Stage darkens amid sounds of a storm. RIP and BEN walk upstage to join MEN donning tattered jackets and army hats. REBECCA and RIPJE arrive.*)

RIPJE

Daddy? Where's Daddy?

JENNY

Rebecca, they left with the soldiers!

REBECCA

What's going on? Who left?

JENNY

Rip! ...and Ben.

REBECCA

What? But--when are they coming back?

*(MEN step forward as ARMY SOLDIERS.)*

SOLDIERS

WOMEN

FIRELOCKS ARE PRIMED

LOAD THE BALL

RAM IT DOWN

DOWN

AND WE FIRE ALL TOGETHER

NOW WE FORGE A LINK

MAKE IT STRONG

OUT OF STEEL

STEEL

THEN WE PUT THE CHAIN TOGETHER

GRAB YOUR GUN AND YOUR BOOTS

AND WE'RE CRAWLING IN THE DIRT

AND YOUR FEET ARE GETTING COLD

AND YOUR BELLY STARTS TO HURT

AND THE ENEMY'S ON THE WAY

AND WE'RE GOING TO WAR TODAY

AND WE'RE GOING TO WAR TODAY

AND THE FOOD IS RUNNING OUT

AND OUR SHOES ARE GETTING THIN

ALL THE POWDER'S GETTING WET

AND THE COLD IS SETTING IN

BUT WE'RE GOING TO WAR TODAY--

*(ALL sitting down, except for RIP)*

WE'RE GOING TO WAR TODAY--



*(Several ACTORS shake rattles, music becomes more agitated)*

RIP

Ben, where'd you go? What happened? Where is everyone?

HUDSON

*(emerging from the bar crowd)*

Rip Van Winkle! Get ahold of yourself, man.

RIP

What? Who are you? And--where are we?

HUDSON

Don't you recognize this? Think. Look around you.

*(Rattles soften and music subsides to a repeated figure.)*

RIP

Oh...wait a minute--is this--the Bowling Green?

*(HUDSON smiles)*

And you're Henrick Hudson! I--I tell me my little boy stories about this all the time. But how can I be here?

HUDSON

Must be destiny.

RIP

Well, I have to find Ben and get back to--

HUDSON

Hold on a minute!

*(to the bartender)*

Could I get a couple of pints over here? Our soldier's a bit dry.

RIP

This is beautiful--and--there's even a bar!

*(DAME ANNA delivers the ale)*

HUDSON

Now. Get back to where? Where you came from? You don't want to go back there.

*(including the bar)*

A toast, everyone: to the Bowling Green!

GNOME (*spoken by HUBERT*)

Three cheers for the Bowling Green!

ALL (*including audience*)

Huzzah! Huzzah! Huzzah!

(*THEY drink along with the bar*)

We all need a place like this from time to time!

(*"Everything's Changed" vamp begins.*)

HUDSON

But I want to tell you a little story. See, you and I, we're explorers. We don't follow paths--we make them. Oh, you're a hero when you bring back the prize. But as soon as your path encounters a little trouble, then you hear the whispers behind your back. They'll do like my crew did to me when I was trapped in the Hudson Bay. One morning I woke up and I wasn't captain anymore. My own crew turned on me--cut me loose and left me drifting.

(*dangerously*)

Don't you see? The same thing's going to happen to you. Why do you think you found me here?

A SPECIAL PLACE  
THIS LITTLE SPACE  
ALL YOUR OWN--  
WHY GO BACK?

THE TOPS OF TREES  
MAKE CANOPIES  
THAT SWAY FOR YOU  
WHY GO BACK?

THERE'S PEACE OF MIND HERE

Peace. And my ship, the Half Moon

(*pointing to an invisible ship*)

docks here every month--before we go sailing off into the sky.

(*RIP does not see the ship. Across the room, REBECCA and JENNY confer*)

JENNY

Rebecca, we haven't heard a thing. It's been 3 weeks. What if--they're not coming back?

REBECCA

We'll hear something soon, Jenny.

RIP and HUDSON

*(singing to the bar audience:)*

A SMATTERING  
A SCATTERING  
OF YELLOW LEAVES  
WHY GO BACK?

A LITTLE RUST  
YELLOW DUST  
DRIFTING DOWN

RIP

So beautiful...

HUDSON & CHORUS

IT'S ALL FOR THE BEST  
JUST PUT IT TO REST

RIP and HUDSON

*(ecstatically, to the bar)*

WHILE THERE'S THUNDER ROLLING BY  
UP ABOVE, THE SKY  
IS EMPTY AND CLEAR

AN ANCIENT BOWLING GREEN  
PEACEFUL AND SERENE  
THERE'S NOTHING TO FEAR

IT'S SIMPLY PERFECT HERE!  
ISN'T IT PERFECT HERE?

*(RIP revels in the Bowling Green splendor as HUDSON removes his Dutch hat and becomes REVEREND GANSEVOORT. HE walks over to REBECCA's house and knocks as the music drops. REBECCA answers.)*

GANSEVOORT

Dame Rebecca

REBECCA

Reverend.

GANSEVOORT

There's been a report that...the Canada invasion didn't find the support we expected. Apparently, what was left of our forces scattered after a rout at Montreal. There's no word on most of the soldiers at this point.

RIP

SO CUT THE STRINGS...

THOSE LITTLE STRINGS  
FROM ALL THOSE THINGS  
LEFT BEHIND

A BALL YOU TOSSED  
A BUTTON LOST  
LITTLE THINGS

THE CANDLELIGHT  
A KISS GOODNIGHT  
LITTLE STRINGS  
LET THEM GO...

THIS CAN BE HOME  
THIS CAN BE HOME  
WHY GO BACK?

REBECCA

Rip thought if he could just get a good crop of corn to grow...

GANSEVOORT

Here?

*(HE chuckles)*

I'm not sure anything will ever grow through all these rocks. I suppose the church might be interested in the plot if you'd like us to take it off your hands...we could find you another place closer to town--

REBECCA

Reverend, I don't need the house "taken off my hands." And I haven't given up on Rip.

GANSEVOORT

Of course not, I understand.

*(JENNY puts her hand on REBECCA's shoulder as  
GANSEVOORT steps away)*

JENNY

Rebecca--Rebecca...

REBECCA

A field of rocks. But we had all these dreams, Jenny--

WHAT SHOULD MAKE A WOMAN FALL IN  
IN LOVE WITH A MAN?  
IT'S NOT SOMETHING YOU PLAN

OUR LIFE WAS FILLED WITH CRAZY SCHEMES  
AND MAYBE I KNEW  
THEY WOULD NEVER COME TRUE

BUT MY WORLD OPENED UP LIKE A SONG  
HE WOULD LAUGH WHEN THEY SAID WE WERE WRONG  
AND I BELIEVED IN THE WORLD WE HAD MADE  
YOU DON'T KNOW 'TILL IT ALL STARTS TO FADE  
THAT YOU WERE DREAMING

AND THE TROUBLE WITH DREAMS  
IS YOU HAVE TO WAKE UP  
AND WHAT YOU WERE DREAMING  
DISAPPEARS  
YOU FOLLOWED YOUR HEART  
SO THE FAULT IS YOUR OWN  
YOU GIVE ALL YOU'VE GOT  
THEN ONE DAY, YOU'RE ALONE

'CAUSE DREAMS FADE AWAY  
IN THE GLINT OF DAWN  
THEY TUG AT YOUR HEART  
AND THEN THEY'RE GONE  
THAT'S THE TROUBLE WITH DREAMS

BUT SOMETIMES YOU'RE SURE IT'S REAL  
THE THINGS YOU'VE BEEN WAITING TO FEEL,  
AND ALL THE STORIES YOU HOLD  
CAN START TO UNFOLD--  
CAN WAKE UP AND GROW  
YOU LET THEM ALL GO  
AND THEY BLOSSOM  
YOU LET GO AND THEY BLOSSOM

THEN THE PETALS COME DOWN  
LIKE THE FIRST WINTER SNOW  
THAT FALLS ON THE HILLS  
AND DISAPPEARS  
THE WARMTH OF HIS SKIN  
THERE BESIDE YOU AT NIGHT  
WHEN THE WOLRD FALLS IN PLACE  
WHEN YOU KNOW THAT IT'S RIGHT

YOU WANT TO HOLD ON  
TO EVERYTHING  
TO THE GOOD--TO THE BAD--  
TO EVERYTHING  
BUT THE SUN'S IN YOUR EYES  
AND YOU CAN TELL,  
IT'S THAT SURPRISE  
YOU KNOW TOO WELL  
YOU WAKE UP ALONE--

THAT'S THE TROUBLE WITH DREAMS.

*(Music for "Everything's Changed" starts. DUTCHMEN gather around RIP.)*

HUDSON

All aboard!

RIP

I see it. I see the ship!

*(The DUTCHMEN pull RIP into their midst.)*

MEN

CLIMB ABOARD  
WHILE SHE'S MOORED  
COME AND SAIL WITH US  
HAVE NO FEAR  
DISAPPEAR  
RIDE THE GALE WITH US

FEEL THE TUG,  
GRAB A MUG  
TASTE THE ALE WITH US

HUDSON

AS WE LEAVE THIS WORLD BEHIND  
WE'LL LEAVE THIS WORLD BEHIND

DON'T REGRET  
JUST FORGET  
AS THE COMPASS SPINS  
COME BELOW  
AND WE'LL STOW AWAY  
ALL YOUR SINS

TILL WE'RE FREE  
OUT AT SEA  
THEN THE GAME BEGINS

AS WE LET THE THUNDER ROLL!  
WE'LL LET THE THUNDER ROLL!  
*(DUTCHWOMEN run out to join in)*

ALL  
SO WE RAISE THE SAILS HIGH  
IN THE MACKEREL SKY  
AS THEY BILLOW AND CATCH  
DON'T LOOK BACK

MEN  
FOR THE WORLD WILL BE CHANGED  
ALL YOU KNOW WILL BE CHANGED  
OVERTURNED, REARRANGED  
YOU MAY TRY TO GO BACK

HUDSON	CREW
BUT EVERYTHING'S CHANGED	CLIMB ABOARD, DON'T LOOK BACK
ALL YOU KNOW HAS BEEN CHANGED	CLIMB ABOARD, DON'T LOOK BACK
OVERTURNED, REARRANGED	CLIMB ABOARD,
YOU CAN TRY TO GO BACK	YOU CAN TRY TO GO BACK

HUDSON  
BUT EVERYTHING'S CHANGED.

*(ALL exit, with HUDSON lingering as RIP stands alone.)*

End of Act I

INTERMISSION (*directly following the End of Act I. HUDSON becomes VEDDER again.*)

VEDDER

Well, I'm afraid our story's gone off in a dark direction. But lucky for all of us, we're not lost in the hills of the Catskills; we're in a nice warm tavern in \_\_\_\_\_. And it's about time for a run to the bar. Or the bathroom. We're going to jump 20 years into the future. So we thought a little drinking song might be order!

BROM

Why do we need a drinking song to jump ahead 20 years? We're drinking now. We'll be drinking then.

VEDDER

Not me. I'll be gone in 20 years.

HUBERT

Well let's drink one for Vedder, then!

VEDDER

Only one?

*(Music starts. An announcement is made if flip is available at the bar. VEDDER, HUBERT and BROM gather around the piano. DAME ANNA [and perhaps another ACTOR] pulls out a sign with lyrics on both sides:*

*Side 1: No, sir!                      Side 2: A nip of flip!*  
*No, sir!*  
*Yes!*  
*Hey!*

*As the song progresses, DAME ANNA, JONATHAN DOOLITTLE, REBECCA and JENNY can join in. RIP does not participate.)*

HUBERT

A MAN FEELS LOW WHEN HIS CORN AIN'T A-GROWIN'  
NEEDS HIM A NIP JUST TO GET HIMSELF GOIN'

VEDDER, HUBERT AND DOOLITTLE

A NIP OF FLIP  
WHEN THE DAY'S BEGINNIN'  
WHOA—OH  
START HIM OFF A-GRINNIN'



BROM

POOR MAN, SINGING FOR HIS DINNER  
SINGIN' ALL DAY BUT HE KEEPS GETTIN' THINNER

Give that man--

VEDDER, HUBERT and DOOLITTLE

A NIP OF FLIP  
TO STOP HIS BELLY ACHIN'  
WHOA-OH  
GET THAT LEG A-SHAKIN'

VEDDER

You gonna shake that leg, Brother Brom?

BROM

My wife says it's "undignified."

MEN

Hmmmmmm.

VEDDER

HARD TIMES, TROUBLE WITH THE MISSUS  
SLIDE HER A NIP AND SHE'LL GIVE YOU THOSE KISSES

ALL

A NIP OF FLIP  
BETTER MAKE IT SNAPPY  
WHOA-OH  
KEEP YOUR MISSUS HAPPY

*(DOOLITTLE enters, wearing a tri-cornered hat)*

VEDDER

Ah--You're that new revolutionary fellow.

DOOLITTLE

Jonathan Doolittle at your service  
*(removing his hat and bowing)*

DAME ANNA

*(to WHOMEVER is next to HER)*

Ooh, I like that hat!

*(HUBERT feels his head, finds his hat missing)*

Impossible But True--In A Tavern

DAME ANNA  
YOUNG MAN, STRONG, FIT AND ABLE  
WHAT THIS MAN NEEDS IS SOME SUGAR ON HIS TABLE

MEN  
Whoa-oh!

DAME VEDDER (*disapproving*)  
Anna!

AND A NIP OF FLIP  
TO START'EM UP ROMANCIN'

DAME ANNA  
Oh, yes!  
(*circling DOOLITTLE*)

DAME ANNA and MEN  
WHOA-OH  
MAKE'EM FEEL LIKE DANCIN'  
(*ANNA dances away*)

VEDDER  
(*to DOOLITTLE*)  
Go on, then!

DOOLITTLE  
I'm not much of a dancer...

HUBERT  
I can dance, Anna...

BROM  
He needs some flip!

DOOLITTLE  
Ahh--never was partial to that stuff back home.

VEDDER  
You'll like mine. It's better than breakfast! Heh, heh,  
heh! Now first, the old beer,...then some cream  
(*pouring generously*)  
eggs! and a little rum! Then I put the hot poker in!  
(*HE coughs, then waves away the steam.*)

DOOLITTLE  
How about this one:  
HARD TIMES, TROUBLE WITH THE MISSUS

HUBERT (*interrupting*)  
Naw, we already did that one--

BROM  
We still got trouble, though!

(*MEN, all at once:*)  
DOOLITTLE: I'm really trying to stay out of trouble!  
HUBERT: Listen, if you're talking about women...  
BROM: Big trouble! Spats, caterwauling--

VEDDER (*interrupting*)  
Aw, hush! You're all young. You don't know what trouble  
is. Listen here:

AIN'T NO CURE FOR A MAN GETTIN' OLDER

BROM  
That's right--

VEDDER  
KNEES START KNOCKIN' AND THE COLD GETS COLDER

(*MEN murmur assent then raise their flip*)

ALL  
BUT A NIP OF FLIP

VEDDER  
WITH HIS BISCUIT AND HIS JELLY

ALL  
WHOA-OH

VEDDER  
PUTS SOME FIRE IN HIS BELLY.  
(*to the bar*)

Sing along with us!  
(*DAME ANNA holds up her sign and points to the  
lyrics*)

DOES HE WANT PEAS WITH HIS PORRIDGE?

ALL  
NO SIR!

Impossible But True--In A Tavern

VEDDER  
DOES HE WANT GRUEL ON HIS CORNCAKES?

ALL  
NO SIR!

VEDDER  
TAKE IT AWAY!

ALL  
YES!

VEDDER  
BRING HIM HIS CUP!

ALL  
HEY!  
NOTHING WILL LIFT THAT POOR MAN UP  
LIKE A NIP OF FLIP

HUBERT  
WHEN THE DAY'S BEGINNIN'

ALL  
A NIP OF FLIP

BROM  
FOR THE WORRY THAT HE'S BIN IN

ALL  
A NIP OF FLIP

VEDDER  
WHEN HIS BODY GETS TO ACHIN'

ALL  
TAKE AWAY HIS TROUBLES  
GET THAT LEG A-SHAKIN'

HUBERT  
Go on and shake that leg, Brother Brom!

*(BROM dances an odd jig.)*

HUBERT  
MAN FEELS LOW WHEN HIS CORN AIN'T A -GROWIN'

Impossible But True--In A Tavern

BROM  
WHEN HE FEELS SO BAD THAT HE CAN'T GET GOIN'

VEDDER  
WHEN HIS HENS AIN'T LAYIN'

DOOLITTLE  
AND THE BILLS NEED PAYIN'

BROM  
AND THE TEMPERATURE'S FALLIN'

DOOLITTLE  
AND THE LANDLORD'S CALLIN'

VEDDER  
AND HIS CHEESE AIN'T SELLIN'

HUBERT  
THEN HIS PREACHER STARTS YELLIN'

DOOLITTLE  
WHEN HIS HORSE GETS LAZY

BROM  
OR HIS MAMA` GOES CRAZY

ALL  
WHEN HIS MIND'S FULL OF DOUBT  
AND HE'S CASTIN' ABOUT  
AND HE'S LOOKIN' TO FIND A WAY OUT

VEDDER  
What's that man need?

ALL  
HE NEEDS A NIP OF FLIP

HUBERT  
TO GET THAT MAN A-GRINNIN'

ALL  
A NIP OF FLIP

Impossible But True--In A Tavern

BROM  
TO GET THAAT LEG A-SHAKIN'

ALL  
A NIP OF FLIP

VEDDER  
TO START HIM UP ROMANCIN'

ALL  
TAKE AWAY HIS TROUBLES  
MAKE HIM FEEL LIKE DANCIN'

*(The music concludes. STAGE MANAGER or PIANIST  
makes fund pitch and bucket is passed around.)*

--FIVE to TEN MINUTE INTERMISSION--

Act II (*Reverend GANSEVOORT steps out*)

GANSEVOORT

Ladies and Gentlemen! Congratulations! You just lost 20 years drinking that toxic concoction! But we've got a play to finish. It's 1795.

*(All characters are now 20 years older than they were in Act I.)*

Scene 1 (*Music starts. TOWNSPEOPLE gradually step forward and join the song.*)

JENNY

THE YEARS HAVE GONE BY LIKE A STREAM DOWN THE HILL  
TUMBLING, FINDING ITS WAY DOWN THE HILL

JENNY and DOOLITTLE

*(who joins HER, holding HER hand)*

THERE'S QUESTIONS WE'VE ANSWERED  
OTHERS THAT NOBODY WILL.

GANSEVOORT

AND DAYS HAVE SWEEP BY LIKE A LEAF IN THE STREAM  
SPINNING, THEN CARRIED AWAY IN THE STREAM

GANSEVOORT and REBECCA

*(who joins HIM, holding HIS hand)*

THE STONES WE'VE UNCOVERED

GANSEVOORT

LOOK HOW THEY SPARKLE AND GLEAM

JENNY and DOOLITTLE

WHO COULD HAVE KNOWN THAT WE'D LAND HERE?  
AND AFTER YEARS HAVE GONE BY, THAT WE'D STAND HERE?

JENNY, REBECCA, DOOLITTLE, and GANSEVOORT  
WITH ALL THAT BEHIND US  
YOU COULD STILL FIND US  
COMING DOWN  
THAT HILL  
TOGETHER

*(OTHERS gradually join SINGERS.)*

HUBERT

THE MOMENTS SLIPPED BY LIKE A BREEZE IN THE NIGHT

DOOLITTLE

TOUCHING US, LEAVING ITS TRAIL THROUGH THE NIGHT

HUBERT, BROM and DOOLITTLE.

THINGS FALL BY THE WAYSIDE

DOOLITTLE

SOME DISAPPEAR IN THE LIGHT

ALL

AND YEARS HAVE GONE BY LIKE THE STREAM DOWN THE HILL  
WANDERING, WINDING ITS WAY DOWN THE HILL  
WHO KNOWS WHERE IT LEADS TO  
BUT WE FOLLOW IT STILL.

ALL

THERE WERE DAYS WHEN THE WATER RAN STRONG HERE  
CARVING NEW PATHS AS IT BORE US ALONG HERE  
TUMBLING DOWN OVER  
THE MILKWEED AND CLOVER  
AND WE'VE LIVED TO SEE THESE

(WOMEN)

YEARS GOING BY LIKE A  
LIKE A STREAM DOWN THE HILL  
TUMBLING, FINDING ITS  
WAY DOWN THE HILL

(MEN)

YEARS GOING BY STREAM  
TUMBLING DOWN

ALL

AND WE HAVE COME DOWN EVERY YEAR--  
TO HERE  
TOGETHER.



Scene 2 (*Center square of town, at the tavern. An outdoor assembly has gathered around REVEREND GANSEVOORT, who stands on a podium facing the audience. JONATHAN DOOLITTLE [who sports a tri-cornered hat], HUBERT, BROM, DAME RACHEL and DAME ANNA sit with the audience. The bar audience is part of this assembly and can be addressed by the ACTORS. GANSEVOORT is concluding his talk.*)

GANSEVOORT

Yes, there were hardships. But we triumphed because our cause was just. Tomorrow, Dame Rebecca and I will be moving to Boston to continue our work there. With no further ado, your newly elected mayor: Jonathan Doolittle.

DOOLITTLE

Estimable countrymen--I've prepared a few words for the occasion:

*(stepping on the podium. Music starts.)*

History--is a great tapestry upon which we play out our lives. But in rare moments, we can reknit that tapestry! Our revolution blazed a flaming trail whose incandescence will shine for generations to come. And it is this!

*(lowering his voice)*

It is this--my fellow countrymen, which will guide the footsteps of those...

*(The next lines follow immediately while Doolittle fades out.)*

BROM

It is...what? In-can-tation?

DAME RACHEL

The "ink" and "essence," I think.

DAME ANNA

No, he's talking about a tapestry..

DAME RACHEL

A tapestry? What on earth for?

MEN

PROGRESS

A LITTLE EVERY DAY

TRY TO KEEP IN STEP

DON'T GET IN THE WAY

WOMEN

PROGRESS...  
ALWAYS SOMETHING NEW  
THAT NO ONE'S EVER SEEN  
BUT THEY'RE ASKING US TO DO

MEN and WOMEN

PROGRESS  
GOT TO BE THE BEST  
GOT TO MOVE AHEAD  
WHO COULD EVER REST

BUT IT'S PROGRESS  
IT'S A MESS  
BUT WE PROGRESS

WOMEN

PROGRESS

HUBERT

What is it?

DOOLITTLE

*(still gesturing from his step)*

An iron plow, of course. Scientifically designed!

WOMEN

PROGRESS

BROM

Hmphf.

HUBERT

But what's wrong with the old plows?

BROM

*(to DOOLITTLE)*

Yeah, what's wrong with the old ones?

MEN

PROGRESS

DAME RACHEL

So what is it?

DAME ANNA

Whortleberry strudel, she says. Some kind of German thing.

MEN

PROGRESS

DAME RACHEL

*(throwing up her hands)*

Whortleberries! Whortleberries! Why? Why does everyone suddenly want whortleberries? What about my biscuits?

MEN

PROGRESS

DAME ANNA

Jenny says it's the new thing in Albany

DAME RACHEL

What do they know in Albany? Taste my biscuits!

HUBERT

And what do scientists know about plows?

ALL

OUT WITH THE OLD  
IN WITH THE NEW  
'CAUSE THAT'S HOW WE DO

AND WE CAN'T LOOK BACK  
WE MUST STAY ON TRACK

WOMEN

IF WE TRY TO STOP AND THINK  
THEY'LL MARCH AWAY

MEN

IF WE STOP AND HAVE A DRINK  
THEY'LL MARCH AWAY

ALL

HAVE YOU HEARD THE NEWS?  
THERE'S NO TIME TO LOSE  
WE MUST HURRY AND CATCH UP  
TO TODAY

AND THEY CALL IT PROGRESS--

*(On the word "PROGRESS," a chord and ACTORS abruptly sit down. RIP emerges, dirty and disheveled, with a huge beard that is full of twigs and leaves. Atonal music accompanies him.)*

RIP

Aa..aaaa...aaaaahhhmmm! I must have overslept!

*(HE yawns uncontrollably, then suddenly sits up.)*

What happened?! What happened?!

*(HE looks around)*

This looks--familiar...

*(HE stretches, and immediately winces, reaching for his lower back.)*

Stiff. And my head! Did I sleep on a rock? What's that awful racket?

*(RIP glares at the piano player. Music changes to "Putting Things Away" intro. Across the room, REBECCA addresses a 25-year-old RIPJE, played by DAME ANNA with an artificially low voice.)*

REBECCA

Ripje, William is not going to be happy about this!

RIPJE

It's now or never, Mother. I can't be cooped up in a Boston seminary. I have to explore!

*(RIPJE exits the house, continuing his monologue.)*

I'm gonna wander the world as I please! Nothing to tie me down! Maybe...I'll make a map of the new frontier...!

*(HE encounters RIP stumbling toward the town square)*

RIP

Hey!--hey young fella, help me out here! I'm a little turned around. I'm looking for the town.

RIPJE

What town?

RIP

Ah..., you know! The town! My town!

RIPJE

Um, well, my town is right down the hill. Look in at the tavern--maybe they could help you there?

RIP

Oh, a tavern! Well! I'm going to your town, young fella!

RIPJE

Yeah. You might want to...clean up a bit first... Sir?

RIP

*(drunkenly descending)*

Aarhhh...down the hill

*(Music re-enters from the town.)*

RIP

Hmmh! Looks like my old town--but who are these people?

*(RIP watches. The town resumes singing.)*

MEN and WOMEN

AND WE CAN'T LOOK BACK

WE MUST STAY ON TRACK

WOMEN

IF WE TRY TO STOP AND THINK  
THEY'LL MARCH AWAY

MEN

IF WE STOP AND HAVE A DRINK  
THEY'LL MARCH AWAY

ALL

HAVE YOU HEARD THE NEWS?  
THERE'S NO TIME TO LOSE  
WE MUST HURRY AND CATCH UP  
TO TODAY

*(RIP emerges into town, bumping into people.)*

MEN and WOMEN

*(softly)*

DON'T GET IN THE WAY!  
DON'T GET IN THE WAY!  
DON'T GET IN THE WAY!  
DON'T GET IN THE WAY!  
DON'T GET IN THE WAY!  
DON'T GET IN THE WAY!  
DON'T GET IN THE WAY!

WOMAN'S VOICE

PROGRESS

PROGRESS

DOOLITTLE

And that, gentlemen and ladies, is progress!

*(holding up a pocketwatch and squinting at it)*

It's time to eat strudel!

DAME RACHEL

*(pulling out a table)*

Let's put out the pies here...

RIP

*(loudly)*

Who is this bumpkin?

*(RIP is staring at portrait of George Washington on the tavern door. Crowd backs away.)*

DOOLITTLE

You, sir--mind your tongue!

DAME RACHEL

What's that smell?

*(RIP grunts and scratches his belly, oblivious to stares. Meanwhile, JENNY has set out several pies.)*

RIP

Pies...

*(HIS eyes get big and HE trips, landing at the foot of the table, at eye level with the desserts)*

Pie! And more pies! Puff-paste!

DOOLITTLE

I'm sorry, we don't know you; I'm going to have to ask you to leave--

RIP

*(belligerently)*

Who--are you?

DOOLITTLE

I'm Jonathan Doolittle, mayor of this town!

RIP

Do. Little.

*(thinking for a moment)*

Hah! Sounds like a mayor! ...Look here,

*(pointing at the tavern door)*

What happened to King George? Did you give him a haircut?

DOOLITTLE

That's not King George. That's George Washington. And you can't just come into the square and start eating our puff-pastry. The war's over. This isn't your town.

RIP

This is my town! And I paid taxes to the King, just like the rest of you! I want a piece of pie!

*(the crowd murmurs, shocked)*

DOOLITTLE

Ah, you're a Tory!

*(DAME ANNA and BROM start the crowd chanting: "Tory! Tory!" first quietly then getting louder.)*

BROM

Your type aren't welcome here anymore, right?

*(angry murmurs from townsfolk throughout the bar)*

DAME ANNA

You came to the wrong town!

HUBERT

Let's show him out.

*(OTHERS assent. THEY grip RIP and force HIM toward the door of the bar.)*

RIP

No, you're making a mistake! Don't any of you know Rip Van Winkle?

*(THEY stop.)*

DOOLITTLE

*(suspiciously)*

Do you know Rip?

RIP

I am Rip! Rip--Van Winkle!

DOOLITTLE

The fellow's lost his mind. Rip left town this morning.

*(HE motions to the OTHERS, who take hold of RIP again.)*

RIP  
No, no!-- that wasn't me! I'm Rip Van Winkle!

DOOLITTLE  
You know what to do with him.

*(HUBERT and BROM drag RIP back to the tavern door.)*

RIP  
Hudson was right! But Rebecca will still know me! Where's Rebecca?

HUBERT  
He knows Rebecca!

BROM  
*(to HUBERT)*  
And he knows Hudson! Wait, Hudson? You mean, Henrick Hudson?

DOOLITTLE  
How do you know Rebecca?

RIP  
She's my wife!

*(DOOLITTLE laughs, but HUBERT is struck)*

HUBERT  
Hold on. Could he be--the old Rip? Rip's father?

BROM  
Impossible. He's's been dead for years!

RIP  
What's wrong with you people? Do I look dead?

BROM  
*(to HUBERT)*  
He smells dead.



HUBERT

*(peering into RIP's face)*

But if we cleaned him up...

RIP

Hey!...you're Hubert!

HUBERT and BROM

It's Rip!

RIP

But...how'd you all get so old?

Scene 3 (*From the other side of the bar*)

GANSEVOORT

Rebecca? I just learned he's run off again!

(*REBECCA stands, center*)

Why didn't you stop him?

REBECCA

Ripje? He said he talked with you about his plans.

GANSEVOORT

(*exasperated*)

Yes, but I told him "no!" It's completely irresponsible! Going out West! There's no civilization in the Ohio Territory! I've never been able to talk sense into that boy.

REBECCA

Weren't you like that when you were young?

GANSEVOORT

No.

(*REBECCA cocks her head doubtfully*)

No! Absolutely not!

REBECCA

That's the problem, William.

GANSEVOORT

(*seeing REBECCA's things strewn about the room*)

Rebecca, try to get all this mess sorted out. And if you keep opening things up, we'll never leave.

(*GANSEVOORT exits. REBECCA is left alone. Music starts.*)

REBECCA

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS OF FILLING UP SHELVES  
OF PACKING UP MEMORIES  
AND THROWING THEM IN A SACK  
BUT NOW, THEY HAVE ALL COME  
TUMBLING BACK...  
ALL OF THESE THINGS  
THAT DON'T HAVE A PLACE ANYMORE  
IT'S TIME--TO

PUT THEM IN BOXES  
SEAL THEM UP TODAY  
IT'S FINALLY TIME FOR  
PUTTING THINGS AWAY

THINGS WE NEED IN BASKETS  
LEAVE THE REST BEHIND  
I'LL DO IT NOW--  
BEFORE I CHANGE MY MIND

I COULD SIT HERE FOR HOURS  
UNRAVELING  
AND PULLING OUT THREADS THAT HAVE CROSSED  
WE KNOW HOW IT TURNED OUT  
BUT THE PATTERNS HAVE BEEN LOST

WHERE TO PUT MEMORIES  
TOO MANY THINGS TO KEEP  
PUT THEM BACK  
JUST PUT THEM BACK TO SLEEP

STORIES THAT END  
WITH THESE PIECES LEFT BEHIND IN DISARRAY  
AND I DON'T KNOW HOW TO START  
PUTTING THINGS AWAY.

*(JENNY walks on carrying a a pie.)*

JENNY

Strudel!

REBECCA

Well, hello, Mrs. Mayor!

JENNY

Rebecca, it's going to be a beautiful day today!

REBECCA

I suppose. Weren't you in town for Jonathan's speech?

JENNY

Yes. But I hear him speak every morning. I left early to be sure I could bring you some of my whortleberry strudel before you leave us!

*(brightly, moving around pans in kitchen area)*

You know, whortleberries are all the rage now!...at least in Albany they are. You're going to have to keep up with

these things if you're moving to Boston. Still...I wish you were staying here.

*(JENNY notices REBECCA looking absently through HER things.)*

What are you looking for?

REBECCA

Ripje left this morning and couldn't find his hat. I've been looking for it for the last half hour.

JENNY

I'm sure he left it on a fencepost somewhere. Don't worry about it.

REBECCA

I know I saw it here!

*(JENNY approaches to help.)*

REBECCA

WHY PUT IT AWAY--  
I SHOULD THROW IT ALL OUT!  
WHY KEEP THE CLUTTER AND NONSENSE ABOUT?  
ALL FULL OF MEMORIES TO LEAD YOU ASTRAY  
THEY GET IN THE WAY  
BASKETS AND BOXES AND TRUNKS FULL OF CLOTHES  
ALL OF THESE PAPERS..WHAT FOR? WHO KNOWS?  
I DON'T NEED THIS! I DON'T NEED THAT!  
GET RID OF THE CLOTHES, THE PAPERS, THE SHOES...AND  
THE...

JENNY

*(interrupting)*

Wait, here it is!

*(JENNY pulls a hat out of a sack of clothes.)*

REBECCA

Oh....

*(SHE takes the hat in her hands and looks at it)*

You know, it was really his father's hat. ...Guess I was throwing it out with the rest of Rip's things.

JENNY

Rebecca, look at this--

HERE'S SOME OF THE SHIRTS THAT  
WE MADE FOR THE WAR

REBECCA

THEY NEVER LOOKED RIGHT

JENNY

WE WERE ALWAYS SHORT LINEN  
AND STRETCHED OUT THE FABRIC  
SO WE COULD MAKE MORE

REBECCA

HERE'S THAT OLD SWEATER  
THE KIDS TRIED TO KNIT  
IT HAD ITS CHARM

JENNY (*half-spoken*)

IT'S STILL MISSING AN ARM!

REBECCA

...ASSIGNMENTS WHEN DERRICK  
WAS TEACHING THEM GREEK

JENNY

BACK WHEN WE'D SLIP AWAY  
AND HAVE TEA BY THE CREEK!

REBECCA

THIS IS THE QUILT  
THAT YOU MADE FOR JUDY

JENNY

MY LITTLE FRIEND

REBECCA

WELL, I'M KEEPING THAT

JENNY

ALONG WITH THE HAT

REBECCA

BUT WHERE DOES IT END?

JENNY

I still can't believe you'll be leaving--

REBECCA

Neither can I.

JENNY

These things are--our lives, Rebecca. You can't throw them out.

REBECCA

But--

JENNY

*(pointing to an empty trunk)*

Alright, look. Put the old boots--and all the things you might want--in here. We'll find a place for them. Who knows--maybe you'll be back soon!

REBECCA

Maybe. Are you sure about this, Jenny?

JENNY

Of course.

WE'VE GOT TO SAVE SOMETHING  
SO WHEN YOU'RE BACK AGAIN  
WE'LL PULL IT DOWN  
AND SEE WHERE WE HAVE BEEN

THESE PIECES OF PUZZLES  
ALL LAID OUT ON THE FLOOR  
WHO ELSE COULD PUT THEM  
TOGETHER ANYMORE?  
SO MANY YEARS  
I ALWAYS KNEW YOU'D BE HERE, COME WHAT MAY

REBECCA

We'll write, Jenny. And we'll be able to visit....

REBECCA and JENNY

SO MANY YEARS  
I NEVER THOUGHT WE'D COME TO THIS TODAY

JENNY

BUT NOW IT'S TIME

REBECCA

IT'S FINALLY TIME

REBECCA and JENNY

FOR PUTTING THINGS AWAY.

Scene 4 (*The next day. HUBERT, BROM and DOOLITTLE are seated at the tavern. HUBERT picks up a newspaper.*)

HUBERT

This says soon they won't have roads in Boston--they'll be flying through the air in ships!

BROM

What? Gimme that! You can't read!

HUBERT

I read the pictures.

*(pointing at something inside the paper)*

DOOLITTLE

It's true, though! I've seen it myself--

*(HE grabs the paper and squints)*

Yes! Here it is! It's called an Aerostat. This Frenchman named Blanchard will be giving another demonstration up there.

*(with French accent)*

*Blanchard.*

*(music starts)*

It's a balloon with a basket underneath. An Aerostat.

IMAGINE THAT

NOW WE CAN SAIL

INTO THE SKY

IN AN AEROSTAT

HUBERT

Wait--how does it fly?

DOOLITTLE

It's as if...they blow up a giant pig's bladder, but instead of air, they use hydrogen.

HUBERT

Hydra...gin. Gin I know. What's a hydra?

BROM

The hydra--was a serpent with many heads.

DOOLITTLE

No, hy-dro-gin. It's like air, but it's lighter, so they say. So it floats on the air.

HUBERT

*(struck by the idea)*

Like a boat that floats above the water...

BROM

Ahhh, I don't believe it.

DOOLITTLE

Well, it's true.

IT WAS AN AEROSTAT

OTHERS

IMAGINE THAT

DOOLITTLE

THE MAN FLOATED UP  
INTO THE SKY  
IN THE AEROSTAT  
THOUGH IT MAY SOUND ABSURD  
HE WENT UP LIKE A BIRD  
OR A CLOUD IN THE SKY  
SEE, WE CAN FLY  
I CAN TESTIFY  
I WAS THERE

HUBERT and BROM

You were?

DOOLITTLE

At a demonstration in Philadelphia, right there with  
President Washington himself!

HUBERT

You were with the President?

DOOLITTLE

Standing at his side! Well, almost, nearby...

*(DAME ANNA enters, then turns back, waiting for  
DAME RACHEL, who enters walking with a cane.)*

BROM

I still don't believe it. And I hope I never see a giant  
pig's bladder flying through the sky.



DAME RACHEL

We want to see Rip Van Winkle--the original!

DOOLITTLE

I let him sleep here last night. He's in back, cleaning up to go visit Dame Rebecca--

DAME RACHEL

His...wife.

BOTH

Hmmmmmm.

DAME ANNA

Interesting.

DAME RACHEL

Oh, dear.

*(Without warning, RIP walks out, clean-shaven and looking like his old self again. ALL speak at once:)*

HUBERT

BROM

DAME ANNA

Look at that!

Well!

He hasn't changed a bit!

DAME RACHEL

Rip! What a surprise!

RIP

*(HE stares, not recognizing HER)*

Ahhh...

DAME RACHEL

Rachel Van Vedder.

RIP

Oh! Of course! And Anna Van Onderdonk!

DAME ANNA

Well, Van Oosterhoudt.

HUBERT

Anna's my wife now!

DAME ANNA

Yes....

RIP

Where's Vedder?

DOOLITTLE

Ah, Old Vedder passed about ten years ago. This was his pipe. And this, Rip,

*(pointing at tavern door with HIS pipe)*  
is President George Washington.

RIP

Hmmf. He's not the king?

DOOLITTLE

No!

HE'S THE PRESIDENT

HUBERT *(helpfully)*

IT'S LIKE A KING

DOOLITTLE

No, it's not!

THE LINE OF HIS BLOOD  
DOESN'T MEAN A THING  
WE ELECTED HIM

RIP

But he looks--kind of the same--as King George--

DOOLITTLE

*(interrupting)*

See,

ALL THROUGH THE WAR  
WE WERE UNDER CONSTRAINT

DAME RACHEL

AND NONE OF THE MEN REALLY  
KNEW HOW TO PAINT, SO...

DAME ANNA

...SO IT WAS I!

HUBERT and BROM

WE HAD A KING

DAME ANNA

I shortened the wig...made his coat blue...

HUBERT and BROM

NOW HE'S THE PRESIDENT!

DAME ANNA

My art lessons!

ALL

WE WERE HERE, EV'RY WORD OF IT IS TRUE  
WHO KNEW THE THINGS THAT WE COULD DO

DAME ANNA

I think it's pretty good...

DAMES and DOOLITTLE

WE GOT BY  
WHEN THE TIMES  
WERE SEVERE

MEN

WITH OUR PLUCK  
WITH SOME LUCK  
AND A BEER

DAMES

AND WE CAN TESTIFY TO THAT

MEN

WE WERE HERE.

DAME RACHEL

Yes, they were. Sitting right there, drinking their cider  
and flip!

DAME ANNA

Rachel! That's not fair. They were heroes!

*(MEN make general affirmations)*

Johnny, tell him about the raid!

DOOLITTLE

Ah, well, you probably remember the Smith gang--I'd guess  
they were already stealing cows when you were here. Turns  
out they were selling everything they stole to the British.

But when they got Dame Rebecca's cow, the Reverend led a posse and surprised them at their cave.

OTHERS

IMAGINE THAT!

DOOLITTLE

They surrendered, there was a trial

BROM

And they all hung!

DOOLITTLE

Except for a few, who escaped. They tried to come after the Reverend the next week. They might have caught him alone at the church, too, but Dame Rebecca got word from one of the ladies in her sewing project.

OTHERS

IMAGINE THAT! SHE HEARD THE PLAN!

DOOLITTLE

We hid ourselves in the church, till they showed up to attack--and we jumped out!

OTHERS

IMAGINE THAT! THEY TURNED AND RAN!

BROM

I got two of them!

DOOLITTLE

They never showed their face here again!

OTHERS

IMAGINE THAT! WE FOUGHT THEM BACK!  
UNDER ATTACK! WE FOUGHT THEM BACK!  
WE RODE THEM DOWN! IMAGINE THAT!  
STRAIGHT OUT OF TOWN! IMAGINE THAT!  
WE RODE THEM DOWN! IMAGINE THAT!

ALL

WHO KNEW THE THINGS THAT WE COULD DO  
WE WERE HERE, AND WE STAYED TO SEE IT THROUGH  
AND WE SWEAR EV'RY WORD OF IT IS TRUE  
TIMES WERE RICH

WE WERE POOR  
WITHOUT FEAR  
WE WERE SCARED  
SO CONFUSED  
IT WAS CLEAR

AND WE CAN TESTIFY TO THIS  
WE WERE HERE.

*(Music buttons. The DAMES impulsively applaud,  
general affirmations from the MEN)*

DAME ANNA

Those were the days...  
*(excitedly)*  
So tell us, Rip--where were you?

OTHERS *(all at once)*

Yes, where were you?  
What happened?  
Where have you been?

RIP

I don't know. It feels like one day I went off fishing, and  
the next...I woke up here.

DAME ANNA

You slept through the whole war?  
*(Music starts again. DAME ANNA sips HUBERT's  
flip.)*

RIP

Well, no, I mean--

DOOLITTLE

It's been 20 years. No one can sleep that long! It's not  
possible!

DAME RACHEL

Ridiculous.

HUBERT

Yeah, didn't you get hungry?

BROM

Let the man tell his story!

RIP

Well, I don't think it was an ordinary sleep! I was in a magical bowling green...and then these little men from the old country took me sailing through the sky in their ship!

*(RIP realizes the OTHERS are staring at HIM)*

It's true--I was playing ninepins with Henrick Hudson! And when he rolled the ball, there'd be thunder up and down the hills--like cannons!

DOOLITTLE

But Rip, you're thinking of an old wife's tale.

*(with excitement)*

Now they say that thunder is nature's reaction to the electrified vacuum--

BROM

*(interrupting)*

Jonathan, hush--I wanna hear about Henrick Hudson!

DOOLITTLE

Henry Hudson. He was an Englishman.

BROM

*(leaning forward)*

Were there gnomes?

RIP

Gnomes?

BROM

His crew turned into gnomes!

RIP

He said his crew deserted him.

BROM

There you go. Can't trust a gnome...

RIP

We would drink...this strange kind of gin--

HUBERT

Maybe you drank the Hydra-Gin!

DOOLITTLE

You can't drink hydrogen!

BROM

There's no telling what spirits can do...

DAME ANNA

*(with excitement)*

Right! Maybe they live in the hydra-gin...and then float down in a ship when it storms...

HUBERT

Or they float down--in an Aerostat!

ALL

IMAGINE THAT!

DAME RACHEL

Your brains are becoming addled!

MEN

MORE FLIP! MORE FLIP!

DAME RACHEL

*(shaking HER head)*

There they go again!

DOOLITTLE

To the return of Rip!

MEN and ANNA

Here, here!

HUBERT TO THE HYDRA-GIN!

DOOLITTLE/ANNA AND TO THE AEROSTAT!

DOOLITTLE/HUB MORE FLIP! MORE FLIP!

BROM BETRAYED BY THE GNOMES. ONCE AGAIN,  
BETRAYED BY THE GNOMES.

*(As the MEN raise their glasses, RIP edges to the side and slips offstage.)*

ANNA/HUBERT TO THE HYDRA-STAT!

HUB/BROM AND TO THE AERO-GIN!

DOOLITTLE/ANNA HYDROGEN!





Scene 5 (*RIP arrives at the stream and looks around.*)

RIP

(*puzzled.*)

The old fishing spot.

(*chord*)

But wait...

THERE USED TO BE A TREE HERE  
WASN'T THERE?  
HERE, AT THE BEND IN THE STREAM  
I REMEMBER A TREE HERE  
THE BRANCHES REACHED OUT  
OVER THE STREAM  
INTO THE SKY  
AND THE SKY HASN'T CHANGED  
IT'S STILL THE SAME SKY  
BUT SOMETHING ELSE IS GONE...

THERE USED TO BE A PATH HERE  
WASN'T THERE?  
IT RAN THROUGH THE WOODS TO THE STREAM  
I REMEMBER A DAY HERE, WHEN  
WE FOLLOWED THE PATH  
DOWN TO THE STREAM  
AND STOPPED BENEATH THE TREE  
AND SHE KISSED ME  
I REMEMBER

WHAT HAPPENED?  
ONE DAY THE WORLD LAY AT MY FEET  
I HAD IT ALL--NOW THERE'S NOTHING  
HOW COULD MY WORLD SLIP OUT OF REACH  
ALL BEHIND ME  
HAS IT ALL COME TO NOTHING?

WHAT HAPPENS TO A MAN WHO WASN'T THERE?  
SOMEHOW HE GAVE UP HIS PLACE  
THE WORLD DIDN'T WAIT  
NOW HE'S SUDDENLY OLD  
NOWHERE TO GO  
DOES HE JUST DISAPPEAR? DOES HE  
HIDE IN A HOLE? WANDER AWAY?

CAN HE EVER GO BACK?  
'CAUSE I WANT TO GO BACK  
GIVE ME A CHANCE

AND I'LL RUN BACK DOWN THAT PATH  
FIND HER BY THE STREAM  
HOLD ON TO HER TIGHT  
HOLD ON TO HER TIGHT  
BENEATH THE TREE  
RIGHT HERE...  
WHERE THERE USED TO BE A TREE....

*(GANSEVOORT steps out upstage.)*

GANSEVOORT

Rip? Rip Van Winkle?

RIP

The Reverend Gansevoort.

GANSEVOORT

So, you're really back. That's... wonderful news. But...  
what are your intentions?

RIP

Intentions?

GANSEVOORT

Do you plan to stay? I'm afraid the house has already been  
promised to the incoming reverend. This will be...quite a  
disruption.

*(HE clears HIS throat)*

As you have heard, I'm sure, Rebecca and I have been  
married for nearly 10 years. I helped bring up Ripje. And  
Judy--whom you never even met. And now we've packed our  
things and tomorrow we leave for Boston.

RIP

Tomorrow?

GANSEVOORT

Yes. Your return is nothing short of miraculous...but it  
is a very inopportune moment. Leaving the past behind has  
been difficult enough for Rebecca...you appearing today at  
our door is truly the last thing she needs.

RIP

But--

GANSEVOORT

I'm sorry not to be more...welcoming. If you stay, perhaps Jonathan can help you secure government aid for your wartime service. Assuming you are...eligible. Good day, Rip Van Winkle.

*(GANSEVOORT tips HIS hat and crosses RIP's path, exiting offstage.)*

RIP

Good day...

*(HE exits opposite GANSEVOORT.)*

Scene 6 (*Back at the tavern, DOOLITTLE, HUBERT and BROM take their seats. DOOLITTLE is reading from the paper.*)

DOOLITTLE

Says here the Frenchman took a dog with him in that Aerostat... and a bottle of wine--to give to the farmers when he landed in their fields.

BROM

Smart. The French are smart. ...but I wouldn't want the dog.

HUBERT

Maybe he'll land in my field...

DOOLITTLE

As it happens, that could be arranged--I hear he's looking to stage demonstrations. People would come from miles around!

BROM

Well, ah....I enjoy a nice bottle of French wine...but I don't want crowds of people trampling my turnips...

HUBERT

How much wine can he carry in that thing?

*(RIP arrives and joins THEM. ALL greet RIP enthusiastically.)*

RIP

*(glumly)*

Afternoon.

HUBERT

Rip, where will you be staying?

RIP

I'm...not. I guess I'll be moving on.

*(MEN all protest)*

Apparently my home is promised to the church--there's no place for me here anymore. And without Rebecca,...

BROM

But I thought you wanted to escape your wife! You mean you want her back?

RIP

It doesn't matter what I want--she's married. And she's leaving with the Reverend.

HUBERT

That's too bad. Rip, the Reverend's a good man, but...he can be kind of...cold. We thought you coming back might cheer her up. And Jonathan here says--

DOOLITTLE

*(interjecting)*

The Reverend came asking me about this yesterday. See, technically, they're not married. Not since you returned. Unless Dame Rebecca is granted a divorce, their marriage is void. She's still married to you.

HUBERT

Maybe you still have a chance, Rip! Go back and talk to her!

RIP

No...they're both--war heroes. All I've got is--a ridiculous story...

MEN

*(ALL at once, generally in disagreement)*

Don't think like that...

That's not right..

C'mon, Rip Naw...

RIP

You think I should go talk to her anyway?

MEN

*(at once, murmuring assent)*

Sure...

Give it a shot... Do it.

RIP

Well...I'd have to show her I'm worth something--I'd have to do something important--or bring her something really--

ALL

Hmmmm.

BROM

Jewels?

DOOLITTLE

A beautiful dress?

HUBERT

They had these new plows at the parade yesterday--

DOOLITTLE

Plows? Why would she want a plow?!

HUBERT

I'm just thinking! ...It's new...efficient...  
(*pause*)

DOOLITTLE

Would you give your wife a plow?

BROM

She'd have you out there pullin' it.

RIP

(*deep in thought, then suddenly*)

Hey! I've got it! Can somebody give me a hand?

DOOLITTLE

(*looking around at the OTHERS*)

Well you seem like an alright fellow after all, Rip. I'll help. What do you want to do?

RIP

It'll work! You'll see! C'mon!

(*HE grabs DOOLITTLE's arm and pulls HIM excitedly as THEY walk offstage. Pause. The other MEN remain at the table.*)

HUBERT

You know, he was never known for ideas that work.

(*HE picks up the paper, then looks over it.*)

It is a ridiculous story.

BROM

It's a good story. What do you know about stories? Stick to plows.

HUBERT

I'm gettin' hungry.

Scene 7 (*Back at REBECCA's house, a bit later that afternoon. RIP appears alone at Rebecca's door, out of breath. HE is holding a bouquet of flowers. RIP knocks.*)

RIP

Rebecca?

(*After a moment, REBECCA opens the door.*)

REBECCA

Rip. It is you. How--?

(*laughing nervously*)

I still can't believe it, even with you standing here.  
Where have you been?

RIP

(*RIP hesitates at the door*)

Ahh--is the Reverend here?

REBECCA

No. He's down at the church.

(*RIP nods*)

Rip, I waited. Everyone thought you were dead!

RIP

I--I brought these for you.

(*RIP offers the flowers.*)

REBECCA

Ah--well...thank you...

(*SHE smiles, sniffs THEM and frowns*)

They smell like fish!

RIP

(*laughs*)

Well, I was doing a little fishing with Jonathan, and I forgot to clean--

REBECCA

You went fishing?

(*silence*)

Before you even--came to see me?

RIP

Well, no, you don't understand--Jonathan was--



REBECCA

*(cutting HIM off)*

I don't understand. The first thing you did was go fishing? You left me for 20 years and--

*(darkly)*

Rip, what is this? Where have you been all this time?

*(Pause)*

And don't tell me you were asleep!

YEARS WENT BY  
ALWAYS HOPING FOR THAT  
DAY YOU'D APPEAR  
I WAITED FOR YOU  
YEAR AFTER YEAR  
TRIED TO HANG ON TO THE  
THREADS OF OUR LIVES  
AS THEY SLOWLY WORE AWAY

RIP

Rebecca, I didn't think I could--I dreamed I was--

REBECCA

*(interrupting HIM)*

YEARS AND YEARS  
ENOUGH OF DREAMING, IT WAS  
HARD TO SURVIVE  
NEVER KNOWING IF YOU  
MIGHT BE ALIVE  
ALWAYS RUNNING OUT OF  
FOOD IN THE WAR  
WITH THE SOLDIERS AT THE DOOR  
WHEN YOU LEFT US HERE WITH  
NOTHING! NOTHING!

RUMORS

YOU HAD VANISHED OUT AT SEA  
YOU DESERTED WITH YOUR FRIEND  
YOU WERE SICK, YOU WERE WELL  
YOU WERE DEAD, IN THE END  
NO ONE EVER KNEW  
STILL WE BELIEVED IN YOU.

DID YOU FIND ANOTHER TOWN?  
DID YOU TAKE ANOTHER WIFE?  
TELL ME HOW CAN A MAN  
DISAPPEAR FROM HIS LIFE?

WE WERE HERE FOR YOU.  
WE BELIEVED IN YOU.

BUT ONE DAY  
YOU LOOK UP  
AND THE THREADS ARE ALL GONE  
AND THE DREAMS THAT YOU WORE  
YOU SET THEM DOWN  
PUT THEM AWAY  
AND CLOSE THE DOOR...

NOW HERE YOU ARE  
YOU DON'T EVEN  
KNOW WHAT YOU'VE DONE  
IT'S JUST ANOTHER DAY  
TO PLAY IN THE SUN

RIP

No, I want to--

REBECCA

YOU CAN'T EVEN SAY  
WHERE YOU'VE BEEN  
IT WAS JUST A LITTLE NAP--

RIP

Rebecca!

REBECCA

TO YOU IT DOESN'T MEAN A THING  
WE WERE HERE

RIP

That's not true!

REBECCA

BUT I--I REMEMBER EVERY DAY, EVERY YEAR  
YOU DIDN'T COME. YOU NEVER CAME!  
BUT WE WERE HERE...

*(REBECCA turns away)*

RIP

I...wish I'd been here. I guess I saw Ripje when I woke--  
but we didn't know each other.

REBECCA

He missed you. And--

RIP

And you had a child with the Reverend.

REBECCA

No.

RIP

But he mentioned a...Judy...

REBECCA

*(pause, then softer)*

Rip, she was your child.

RIP

My child?

REBECCA

Our daughter.

RIP

But...

REBECCA

I was pregnant when you left. ...She died in the flu... when she was eight. You would have liked her. And Lord knows she was always dreaming about you....

RIP

Judy?

*(GHOST of JUDY steps up on a chair, wearing white.)*

JUDY'S GHOST

I LIKE TO WEAR THE HAT  
'CAUSE THIS WAS DADDY'S HAT.  
I WAS NEVER HERE WITH HIM,  
BUT THIS IS WHERE HE SAT.  
I WANT TO KNOW MY DAD  
I WANT TO FIND OUT EVERYTHING.  
AND WHEN'S HE COMING BACK?  
I KNOW THAT HE'LL BE BACK  
SOMEDAY I'M GOING TO FIND  
MY DAD

RIP

That is my hat...  
She's right.

REBECCA

We had all heard about Ben a few months after you left....but not a word about you. And then she came.... And she was beautiful--finally, something good. And she grew up with this crazy idea that...someday you were going to walk up to our door, and she'd be there waiting--but--

RIP

Why didn't I...?

*(walks towards JUDY)*

JUDY'S GHOST

RIP

I WANT TO KNOW MY DAD

I COULD HAVE BEEN YOUR

DAD

I WANT HAVE A DAD  
SOMEONE WHO WOULD PLAY  
WITH ME

I WISH I'D BEEN YOUR DAD  
YOU KNOW I PLAYED WITH  
EVERYONE

GO FISHING AT THE STREAM  
ME

WHERE COULD I HAVE BEEN? WITH  
TO NOT BE HERE FOR YOU

I WANT TO FIND MY DAD  
HE COULD FIX UP EVERYTHING

WHERE COULD I HAVE BEEN?  
IF I COULD

THE DAYS WE'RE FEELING BAD  
WHEN MOTHER'S FEELING SAD  
I WANT TO FIND...

DO IT ALL AGAIN,  
I'D BE HERE FOR YOU THEN  
I WOULD HAVE BEEN...  
YOUR DAD

*(JUDY sits back down.)*

RIP

I WANT HER BACK!  
JUST TO SEE HER ONCE  
I NEED ANOTHER CHANCE

REBECCA

WELL SO DO I!  
BUT DID YOU EVER TRY?  
ALL THOSE YEARS  
WE WERE HERE  
OH, YOU KNEW WE WERE HERE!

I NEVER KNEW A THING  
HOW COULD I MISS  
EVERYTHING?

YOU! YOU THREW AWAY  
OUR LIVES

I WOULD GIVE UP EVERYTHING  
JUST TO HAVE THOSE YEARS  
AGAIN

NO! TOO LATE TO MAKE IT RIGHT  
WE USED TO STAND, STARING OUT  
AT THE NIGHT

JUST TO HAVE THOSE  
YEARS AGAIN  
TO LIVE AGAIN

TODAY? YOU WAITED 'TIL  
TODAY?

Impossible But True--In A Tavern

AND THEY'RE GONE  
AND SHE'S GONE

YOU'RE TOO LATE!  
IT'S TOO LATE!  
DON'T YOU SEE

REBECCA

WE BELIEVED IN YOU  
SHE BELIEVED IN YOU  
AND I BELIEVED IN HER  
BUT THAT'S ALL GONE  
NOW YOU'VE COME BACK  
TO NOTHING.

Scene 8 (*REBECCA and GANSEVOORT sit at a table in REBECCA's house. GANSEVOORT has pen and paper in HIS hand. A knocking on the door. GANSEVOORT rises and lays the pen down in front of REBECCA.*)

GANSEVOORT

This will need your signature, then we'll take it right down to courthouse. And get this business out of the way.

*(HE lets JENNY in, followed by DOOLITTLE.)*

JENNY

Hello Reverend. Rebecca, so Rip came to see you? What happened?

REBECCA

He's gone. I guess...I sent him away.

JENNY

But...I'm worried! He didn't look so good. Maybe we should go find him.

GANSEVOORT

We've got business to take care of.

*(JENNY looks at REBECCA, who says nothing)*

JENNY

So then, you'll be leaving tomorrow?

*(REBECCA picks up the pen with resignation and signs the paper. Loud banging of heavy metal buckets upstage, then more knocking.)*

GANSEVOORT

Did someone call a meeting?

REBECCA

I don't know.

*(JENNY goes to the door and lets DOOLITTLE and BROM in. THEY have two metal buckets filled with fish.)*

DOOLITTLE

We were waiting for Rip to show up, but he seems to have disappeared.

BROM

And these fish are for Dame Rebecca!  
(*dragging a bucket toward HER*)

GANSEVOORT

What?  
(*turning to Rebecca*)  
What's going on?

BROM

(*returning with another bucket of fish.*)  
Wait till you see this.

DOOLITTLE

(*to REBECCA*)  
It was the craziest thing. I told Rip I'd give him a hand.  
But I didn't catch a thing! That man knows how to fish.  
He would just throw it in...

(*gesticulating*)  
and he'll pull it up, and there was another fish! And he'd  
throw it back in, and pull it up and--and then he had  
another fish...and then--  
(*HE looks to the door. HUBERT enters, holding a  
huge sturgeon with both arms.*)

REBECCA

Oh my lord...!  
(*laughs, moved*)

GANSEVOORT

We don't have time for this!

HUBERT

(*in awe*)  
It's the big one.

JENNY

It's disgusting! He's got whiskers!

DOOLITTLE

It was a battle. It went on for--nearly an hour--but I'm  
sure he'll tell you about it...

GANSEVOORT

Well, you'll need to take it back. We have absolutely no use for this...fish.

REBECCA

That's not the point!

GANSEVOORT

Then what is the point?  
(*pause*)

REBECCA

Jonathan, what do you mean, he's disappeared?

DOOLITTLE

No one knows. He's gone again.

REBECCA

(*with determination*)

Well then I'm going to find him.

(*REBECCA exits. GANSEVOORT follows HER. HE grabs HER arm as THEY step outside. OTHERS sit.*)

REBECCA

He needs my help. We can't do the divorce yet. I need to stay here.

GANSEVOORT

Rebecca, if we don't file, then you're not married to me. You're married to him.

REBECCA

The only thing I know is--I can't leave now.

GANSEVOORT

THE ONLY THING YOU KNOW  
SURELY YOU KNOW MORE THAN THIS

DOESN'T EVERYTHING WE DO  
PLAY A PART?  
AREN'T WE PART OF HEAVEN'S PLAN?

OR IS IT STUPID LUCK  
AND TIMING?  
IF OUR JOURNEY HAD BEEN MADE



IF WE HADN'T BEEN DELAYED  
WOULD THE PAST HAVE FOUND US STILL?  
OR SLIPPED BACK UP THE HILL?  
WAS IT TIMING?

REBECCA

I'm saying I need more--

GANSEVOORT

There is no time! We were expected in Boston a week ago.  
And you can't arrive there if you have two husbands. I'm a  
minister. You have to make a choice.

REBECCA

William, it's not--I can't--

GANSEVOORT

We have to go now!  
(Pause)

REBECCA

I'm sorry--I'm going to find Rip.

*(GANSEVOORT stares as REBECCA marches offstage.)*

GANSEVOORT

DOES IT ALL COME DOWN  
TO A MOMENT?  
WHEN THAT MOVE A SOLDIER MAKES  
AND THE PATH A BULLET TAKES  
ALL COMBINE TO DEAL THE BLOW  
IS THAT ALL THERE IS TO KNOW?  
TIMING?

DO THE SEEDS WE'VE PLANTED SOMEHOW MISS THEIR  
CHANCE TO COME FORTH?  
DO THEY BLOOM IN MARCH THEN PERISH IN THE  
WINDS FROM THE NORTH?  
IN ALL THE WORLDS THAT WE HAVE PLANNED  
WHAT IS THERE THAT CAN WITHSTAND  
THE FOLLIES OF FATE?  
SHOULD WE STRIVE TO BE GREAT?  
DON'T WE PAY FOR OUR SINS?  
WHAT DETERMINES WHO WINS?

AND THE ANSWER IS  
TIMING

Impossible But True--In A Tavern

IF ON THAT DAY YOU CAUGHT MY EYE  
I HAD SIMPLY WALKED ON BY  
IF OUR MOMENT NEVER CAME

WOULD THE WORLD STILL BE THE SAME?  
DOES IT END LIKE THIS?  
MUST THE SOLDIER FALL?  
IS IT ALL ORDAINED BY FATE?

OR DID WE MOVE A MOMENT TOO LATE?  
IS THAT ALL?

*(Music continues into next scene.)*

Scene 9 (*RIP enters center, agitated*)

RIP

I know you're out here! Henrick Hudson!

*(Pause)*

Come on out! Show your face!

*(Rattles begin. HUDSON stands in a noble explorer stance; HE does not meet RIP's gaze)*

Why did I ever believe you? You're no explorer! What kind of story did you tell me? You're just a coward. What do you say to that? Look at me, man! Show your face!

*(HUDSON turns away, but as HE gestures, ACTORS standing around DOOLITTLE separate to reveal BEN sitting in a chair. Low chord in piano. BEN wears something to indicate HE was wounded in battle. HE is calm. Rattles soften.)*

BEN

Rip, it's me.

RIP

*(becoming his younger self, RIP runs to BEN and kneels. Rapidly:)*

Ben! Ben, I was searching everywhere! Let's get out of here!

BEN

I can't walk.

RIP

I'll carry you!

BEN

No, I'm not going back there.

*(pause)*

Take me home, Rip.

RIP

I gotta get you back to camp.

BEN

No, home. Listen. Can you hear it?

*(Rattles fade out as Fishing Music enters softly)*

RIP

Hear what?

BEN

Our stream. It's right here somewhere.

RIP

No...

BEN

*(laughs)*

Look--the sun's shining down...on you and me...and the fish swimming by... Mom's expecting me back--

*(HE rises and walks away)*

RIP

Ben, don't go...? I'm sorry.

*(REBECCA enters downstage behind RIP. HE doesn't notice.)*

RIP

*(bitterly)*

But I guess it's too late for that.

*(A chord and music stops)*

REBECCA

Rip? Who are you talking to?

RIP

Huh? How'd you get in here?

REBECCA

I guess I followed you. What is this part of the woods? And why haven't I seen it before?

*(Music starts. SHE looks around in amazement)*

It's beautiful. But sad.

RIP

It's the Bowling Green. Where I should have stayed. I never should have come back.

REBECCA

Rip--it was war. So many people never made it back. I--still can't believe that you did.

RIP

Too late.

REBECCA

No...well, yes! You're late. But I'm sorry I was so angry. We believed in you, and...I still believe in you, Rip. Come home with me.

RIP

But--the Reverend

REBECCA

That's been...postponed. I thought maybe we could--start again.

RIP

Start again?

*(Chords from "Go Ahead." THEY both speak at the same time.)*

RIP

I could be much--

REBECCA

I've always thought--

RIP

I think I could--

REBECCA

it could have worked--

REBECCA

You know, it's still the same old farm...nothing really grows...

RIP

But Rebecca, I could get one of those iron plows! I'll build a new fence--or a stone wall and....hmmmm. Maybe...I hear there's this Frenchman looking for a place to land his new--Hydra-- Aerostat.

*(Pf underscore: "Imagine that")*

REBECCA

*(suspiciously)*

His new--what?

RIP

Well, it's a ship,..but it flies through the air--

REBECCA

Rip Van Winkle!

RIP

It's true! I heard it from Jonathan. We could use the money to buy a new farm—a farm with dirt instead of rocks! And...they say there's a new dog and a basket full of wine in the deal!

*(REBECCA cocks HER head dangerously)*

REBECCA

Rip, I said I believed in you. I didn't say I was going to believe everything you said.

*(RIP starts to protest.)*

But, on the other hand--

*(Chord)*

MAYBE THINGS ARE POSSIBLE  
MAYBE PEOPLE DISAPPEAR  
AND THEN ONE DAY THEY'RE HERE  
IT'S POSSIBLE

AND THERE'S SPIRITS THAT ARE STILL  
PLAYING NINEPINS ON THE HILL  
RIDICULOUS  
BUT NOT IMPOSSIBLE

WHAT IS TRUE TURNS  
INTO STORIES  
WHAT WAS STORIES  
COMES TRUE  
IN THE END, WHO CAN SAY

RIP *(out)*

WHAT IS POSSIBLE?  
THINGS WE WOULDN'T EVEN DREAM

RIP and REBECCA  
SUDDENLY CAN ALL SEEM POSSIBLE

REBECCA *(out)*

LITTLE FOLKS CAN WIN,  
KINGDOMS WILL GIVE IN  
IT'S POSSIBLE

RIP and REBECCA  
*(separated, looking out)*  
YEARS GO BY

RIP  
THE WORLD IS FULL OF THINGS

RIP and REBECCA  
WE COULD HAVE DONE  
THEY GO BY  
THERE'S WRECKAGE AND THERE'S TEARS...

REBECCA  
AND THE SETTING SUN  
WE SEE THINGS WE  
COULD NEVER HAVE DREAMED OF

RIP  
AND SOME THINGS WE DREAMED  
WE NEVER ACHIEVE

RIP and REBECCA *(facing out)*  
WE DON'T ALWAYS WIN  
BUT WE CAN BELIEVE THAT  
THINGS ARE POSSIBLE  
*(turning to EACH OTHER)*  
IT MAY BE POSSIBLE  
THINGS ARE POSSIBLE

*(ACTORS stand and assemble with RIP and REBECCA.)*

EVERYONE  
THINGS ARE POSSIBLE  
TYRANTS MAY GIVE IN  
WE CAN REALLY WIN  
IT'S POSSIBLE

SOMEDAY WE WILL FLY  
SAILING SHIPS ACROSS THE SKY  
INCREDIBLE  
NOT IMPOSSIBLE

WHAT IS TRUE TURNS INTO STORIES  
WHAT WAS STORIES COMES TRUE

WHAT IS TRUE TURNS INTO STORIES  
AND WE PASS THEM ALONG

YEARS GO BY  
THE WORLD IS FULL OF THINGS  
WE'LL NEVER SEE  
BUT WE DREAM  
AND SOMETIMES WHAT WE DREAM  
WILL COME TO BE

THOUGH SOME BATTLES WE FOUGHT  
ARE FORGOTTEN  
THOUGH THE PATH THAT WE TOOK  
IS FADING AWAY  
WE LEFT OUR MARK  
AND PEOPLE CAN SAY THAT  
THINGS WERE POSSIBLE  
IT'S NOT IMPOSSIBLE

THINGS ARE POSSIBLE.

THE END.