

Scene Seven

[MUSIC NO. 10A – OPENING 1-7]

*(SCENE: The Grill. Morning. Early May.)*

*(AT RISE: SHELBY is busy in the kitchen as PERCY comes down the stairs and discovers her there. PERCY is surprised.)*

**PERCY.** Shelby, what are you doin' here?

**SHELBY.** Just getting a start on the baking.

**PERCY.** But it's so early.

**SHELBY.** I think it's better if I'm not home right now.

**PERCY.** Yeah?

**SHELBY.** Caleb found out about the raffle. He's not happy.

**PERCY.** *(With as much hair-trigger anger as sympathy.)*  
Why should it matter to him?

**SHELBY.** You don't understand. He tries to take care of everything. Hannah, The Grill –

**PERCY.** Don't go defendin' him, Shelby.

**SHELBY.** I'm not, I only –

*(JOE enters, Percy's parole file under his arm.)*

**JOE.** Miss Talbott? I need to see – Oh, hi Shelby.

**SHELBY.** *(Assuming there might be trouble since JOE is at The Grill so early.)* Morning, Joe. I s'pose you got business...

**JOE.** We can take it outside. Miss Talbott?

*(PERCY and JOE go out to the back porch.)*

You didn't show up for our parole session last night.

**PERCY.** (*Pointing at file.*) Look, why don't you just leave me a list of all your damn questions and I'll answer 'em when I got the time.

**JOE.** Hey. It's my job and I gotta do it.

**PERCY.** Yes, I show up for work every day. Yes, I tell my employer where I go at night. No, I don't have contact with anyone I knew in prison. Yes, I'm gettin' on fine in my job. You can just ask anybody in town and they'll be more'n happy to tell you all about what they think of me.

**JOE.** Okay, okay.

*(Closing the file and setting it down.)*

Forget about the list. Let's just talk.

**PERCY.** Without that list, there ain't much for us to talk about, is there?

**JOE.** You're right...

*(A beat of silence, then.)*

We can sit here as long as you want...just staring at my woods.

**PERCY.** ...Your woods?

**JOE.** It will be when the old man passes on. Every worthless acre, from Hannah's property all the way to the river.

**PERCY.** Never seen so many trees before.

**[MUSIC NO. 11 – THE WIDE WOODS]**

**JOE.** (*Referring to file.*) Country girl like you?

**PERCY.** Do your papers there say I was "born in the West Virginia mountains"?

**JOE.** Uh-hunh.

**PERCY.** Yeah, well, I don't remember no trees, just coal mines...and how my daddy's fingers was always black from tar, even after he washed 'em, and how he coughed till it killed him. "Father deceased." That's when Momma moved us north to the city. Only woods *I* ever saw was in magazines and picture books. But this is better than any picture. It's beautiful.

**JOE.** It's a damn shame that's *all* it is.

*(Sings.)*

BACK BEFORE I WAS BORN,  
A FOREST OF OLD TREES  
KEPT WATCH OVER THE TOWN.  
BUT THE LUMBER MEN CAME,  
SWUNG A BIG AXE,  
AND CUT THE FOREST DOWN.  
AND WHAT GREW BACK  
IS NO DAMN GOOD;  
JUST SCRUB TREES  
AND BRUSH WOOD...

It's all pretty worthless. Soon as it's mine, I'll sell the whole lot and get the heck outta here.

**PERCY.** You really want to leave?

**JOE.**

WHEN YOU LIVE YOUR WHOLE LIFE  
IN THE TOWN OF GILEAD,  
EV'RY MORNING YOU WAKE UP  
TO ANOTHER WASTED DAY.  
WHEN I HAVE ENOUGH CASH,  
I'M TAKING A TRAIN  
A MILLION MILES AWAY.  
I'LL LEAVE BEHIND  
THIS ONE DOG TOWN.  
THERE'S NOTHING HERE  
TO TIE ME DOWN.