

# Synopsis

## APPLESEED

### The Musical

#### ACT ONE, SCENE 1: THE CHAPMAN HOME, LONG MEADOW, MASSACHUSETTS, 1795

The scene is Johnny's apple orchard. The trees are laden with bright red apples. It is peaceful, beautiful, a striking contrast to the crude, rugged existence that will be encountered in the frontier wilderness.

Johnny enters seeking his younger brother, Parley. Excited, he reads Parley a letter from his vanished sweetheart, Katie McNeill, the first news from her in over one year. She writes of moving with her parents while Johnny was away at school; of her regret at not leaving him a message; of her loneliness and despair at living in the remote Northwest Territory. As she recalls their last evening together, Katie appears, a shadowy memory of one year ago.

*"YOU HAVE BROUGHT ME LOVE"*

During the song, she asks Johnny not to leave for school, to stay in Long Meadow till she finishes school. He refuses. She asks him to reconsider, as the flashback ends.

Johnny is restless, unsatisfied with the direction of his life, and decides to head west to find Katie and search for his own destiny. Will Parley accompany him? The boys have dreamed of such an adventure, but now, faced with reality, Parley is unsure. Johnny encourages him.

*"LISTEN TO THE VOICE"*

Parley relents. Their excitement grows. Mrs. Chapman enters and tries to discourage her sons. Parley wavers. Johnny stands firm. Mrs. Chapman finally agrees.

*"GO SPEND YOUR DAYS"*

During the song, the boys exit to begin their journey.

**ACT ONE, SCENE 2: THE DOCKS OF MARIETTA, OHIO**

During the night, a barge has docked. It is now dawn. The small riverfront town is awakening.

*“THE OHIO”*

Johnny and Parley have arrived on the barge. John Adams, later known as Parson Tait, is thrown off as a stowaway. He tries to wheedle money from the boys. Parley refuses, however, Johnny gives him an apple and a few coins. Needing money themselves, they seek a trade with the storekeeper. Johnny is surprised to discover the apples he has brought from home are a precious and valuable commodity. Parley is infatuated with Suzanne, who works for the storekeeper. To impress her, he brags about Johnny’s preaching skills and convinces him to demonstrate.

*“FRESH FROM HEAVEN”*

Adams/Tait observes with growing interest the positive reaction of the settlers to Johnny’s preaching, and steals Johnny’s Bible. Johnny concludes the transaction for the apples. Parley is totally enamored with Suzanne.

*“THE OHIO” (Reprise)*

**ACT ONE, SCENE 3: THE CHAPMAN CABIN, PITTSBURG LANDING**

Johnny sleeps in his young apple orchard. In his dream, the pleading voice of a woman cries out: “Send us more, for God’s sake, send us more.” Johnny awakens. He talks to the trees, asking about the woman’s voice and his destiny.

*“MASTER PLAN”*

Suzanne, now married to Parley, enters and is surprised to discover Johnny, who has reappeared as mysteriously as he had disappeared several days earlier. Johnny and Parley operate a barge transporting settlers across the Ohio River. Suzanne is looking

for Parley and their son, Matthew to assist two families across the river. Johnny promises to take care of the settlers, but becomes engrossed once more with the trees, comparing his destiny to that of an apple tree.

*“MASTER PLAN” (Reprise)*

Parley enters. He had been helping another family that has given up and his heading back east. Parley is also ready to call it quits. For six years, Johnny has been searching vainly for Katie; their lives are aimless; the land is harsh and unforgiving. Johnny attempts to boost Parley’s sagging spirits.

*“LISTEN TO THE VOICE” (Reprise)*

The two wives from the westbound families enter. Mrs. Kimmott is excited, yet apprehensive, fearful of what lies ahead. Johnny gives each woman some seedlings, which help calm their apprehension. Mrs. Kimmott is especially grateful. The wife from the eastbound family enters, bitter, defeated. The women reminisce about the homes they left behind and their hopes for the future.

*“HILLS OF HOME”*

Johnny and Suzanne discuss his frustrations at being unable to find Katie, of his lack of direction and purpose. Parley returns to describe how Mrs. Kimmott lost her seedlings overboard, how she cried out: “Send us more, for God’s sake, send us more.” Johnny recalls his dream and resolves to take seedlings to Mrs. Kimmott and the other settlers. He reveals that during his periodic departures he has planted more apple orchards down river. Despite Parley’s heated objections, Johnny prepares to leave Pittsburg Landing to seek his destiny.

*“FINALE’ ACT ONE”*

**ACT TWO, SCENE 1: THE McNEILL CABIN NEAR CHILLOCOTHE**

The McNeills -- Katie, General and Mrs. McNeill -- along with Katie’s fiancé’, Jesse Moor are preparing for supper. Jesse is something of a rube. Mrs. McNeill thinks he’s Katie’s last, best chance at marriage. General McNeill roots for anyone who will

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make Katie happy. They have learned that Jonathan Chapman is coming to visit. Katie is eager, excited. Mrs. McNeill is apprehensive. General is delighted. Jesse wonders about that crazy Appleseed John, planting trees for nothing. Could they be the same person? They are also awaiting the arrival of the circuit-riding preacher, Parson Tait, formerly John Adams, the stowaway from the Marietta docks. Tait is to perform the wedding. Mrs. McNeill considers ways to shake Katie's indifference toward Jesse. General urges her to be more like him.

*“MINDIN’ MY OWN BUSINESS”*

Abner Winrote, a settler, arrives searching for Appleseed John, rumored to be at the McNeills. The McNeills deny any knowledge, at which point Johnny arrives looking every inch the dusty man of the soil. Mrs. McNeill is horrified. Katie is happy, though confused. General is delighted. Jesse isn't sure what to think. Johnny agrees to plant apple seeds at Winrote's farm. Jesse leaves to search for Parson Tait. Katie takes Johnny out on the porch, while inside the McNeill's conclude:

*“MINDIN’ MY OWN BUSINESS” (Reprise)*

On the porch, Katie trims Johnny's beard. The long-separated lovers cautiously rekindle their love. Johnny tells of his mission and travels. Katie urges him to settle here.

*“STAY”*

Jesse returns with Parson Tait. Antagonism is apparent between the fundamentalist preacher and the gentle planter. Katie announces she will not marry Jesse. A furor erupts with Mrs. McNeill, Jesse, Parson Tait and Katie singing:

*“TROUBLE”*

**ACT TWO, SCENE 2: A CLEARING NEAR THE McNEILL CABIN**

Johnny comforts Katie, urging her to:

*“COME WITH ME”*

Katie again tries to convince Johnny to settle here, singing in counterpoint to Johnny's "Come With Me:"

*"STAY" (Reprise)*

### **ACT TWO, SCENE 3: WEST OF THE RIVER**

Johnny teaches settlers how to plant apple seeds.

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Katie has joined Johnny and they travel from one group of settlers to the next, repeating the planting process. However, as Johnny becomes more preoccupied with the settlers and plantings, Katie is more marginalized and by the end of the song, she has moved off to the side, away from the group.

### **ACT TWO, SCENE 4: THE CHAPMAN CABIN, PITTSBURG LANDING**

Johnny and Katie arrive at the cabin and are reunited with Parley, Suzanne and Matthew. Parley's outlook has improved and with encouragement from Johnny, he agrees to purchase the general store in Marietta.

*"LISTEN TO THE VOICE" (Reprise)*

Parley offers to give their cabin to Johnny and Katie. Weary of traveling and living outdoors, Katie is eager to accept. Johnny refuses. Katie pleads with him; she has tried living his way. Reversing their parts in the earlier version, Johnny sings "Stay" in counterpoint to Katie's:

*"COME WITH ME" (Reprise)*

## **ACT TWO, SCENE 5: THE McNEILL CABIN NEAR CHILLICOTHE**

A storm rages. Inside the cabin, Katie sleeps fitfully, awaiting Johnny who is out trying to save his trees. Mrs. McNeill tells Katie she is foolish to continue waiting for Johnny, continually postponing their wedding. Katie stubbornly defends him. Outside, the rain turns to sleet and begins breaking limbs off the young trees. Johnny returns, convinced he is being punished for lack of commitment, and resolves to replant the lost trees. This is the final straw. Katie refuses to wait any longer. They part, as Johnny resumes his mission.

*“STAY” (Reprise)*

## **ACT TWO, SCENE 6: A CAMP MEETING NEAR MANSFIELD**

Parson Tait is on the stump, “hot footin’ through the brimstone scaring the settlers witless.”

*“LET ME TELL YOU ‘BOUT GOD”*

Johnny emerges from the congregation to challenge Tait.

*“CHILD OF GOD”*

And the debate rages.

*“THE CONFRONTATION”*

The settlers have come over to Johnny’s side and rejoice at being free of Tait’s dark preachings. They attempt to draw Johnny into their celebration. He backs away.

*“CHILD OF GOD” (Reprise)*

Puzzled, the settlers search for Johnny. He has disappeared.

## **ACT TWO, SCENE 7: THE McNEILL CABIN NEAR FORT HENRY**

Katie's and Jesse's little girl, Beth, practices her verses.

*"IN MY BEGINNING"*

Johnny joins her and they are soon joined by General McNeill. Johnny has been searching for Katie. He has not planted in many months. General reveals that Katie has died. Guilt-ridden, racked with pain and doubt, Johnny pours out his heart. How he failed his parents; failed to live up to their expectations. How he failed Parley; when he could no longer run his store, gave him money and sent him home, where he died. How he failed Katie; hurt her, denied their love, turned away from her. "Must I go on hurting everyone I love, tormenting them, disappointing them?" Now his dream is failing. Thousands of settlers are pouring into the territory, destroying the land and the forests. General hears him out, then reveals a secret from his own youth. He reassures Johnny; his work has been worthwhile; those who build great dreams must necessarily leave others behind. As Beth continues her verses offstage, General sings:

*"GO SPEND YOUR DAYS" (Reprise)*

His spirits lifted, Johnny sings of his love for apples.

*"PERFECT APPLE"*

**ACT TWO, SCENE 8: A CLEARING NEAR FORT HENRY**

Johnny arrives at Katie's grave. As he plants two appleseeds, Katie appears, repeating her earlier words of love and encouragement.

*"FINALE"*

They face each other. As the final curtain falls, two seedlings have starting growing beside the grave.