

Underneath the Willow
Tree

by Renee Calhoun

Characters

- **BOOTS IN MUD:** A young girl standing in her boots in a patch of mud under a tree. She's going to help people, but isn't having a very good start, and doesn't know as much as she'd like and knows it.
- **SNEAKERS IN GRASS:** A young girl standing in her sneakers in a patch of grass under a tree. She doesn't know what she wants, but she knows what she doesn't, and she doesn't know if that makes her a bad person.

Setting

Under a medium sized willow tree, during a heavy thunderstorm

Time

A point in time, probably a memorable one.

Notes

The rain does not stop pouring.

A young girl is standing in rain boots in a patch of mud under a medium sized willow tree while a thunderstorm is raining down around her. Suddenly from stage right another young girl wearing sneakers enters, running past the first girl and taking shelter on a patch of grass on the other side of the tree.

BOOTS IN MUD

Umm, excuse me.

SNEAKERS IN GRASS

Oh, hi, yes?

BOOTS IN MUD

What the hell are you doing?

SNEAKERS IN GRASS

Umm nothing, just trying to wait out the storm, just like you.

BOOTS IN MUD

Well could you find somewhere else, this is my tree.

SNEAKERS IN GRASS

What do you mean, this is your tree?

BOOTS IN MUD

Just what I said, it's my tree.

SNEAKERS IN GRASS

Says who?

BOOTS IN MUD

Says me, I was here first.

SNEAKERS IN GRASS

Why does that matter?

BOOTS IN MUD

It just does.

SNEAKERS IN GRASS

Why?

BOOTS IN MUD

Because I said it does.

SNEAKERS IN GRASS

There's plenty of room for both of us.

BOOTS IN MUD

Fine.

Pause

SNEAKERS IN GRASS

Crazy weather we're having.

BOOTS IN MUD

Not that crazy if you looked for the signs.

SNEAKERS IN GRASS

Didn't realize I was supposed to.

BOOTS IN MUD

You wouldn't.

Pause

SNEAKERS IN GRASS

Where are you heading?

BOOTS IN MUD

Why do you care?

SNEAKERS IN GRASS

Was just curious.

BOOTS IN MUD

That way.

SNEAKERS IN GRASS

What? Why? Don't you know what's happening?

BOOTS IN MUD

Yes obviously, that's why I'm going. I'm a protester. I care deeply about the people there.

SNEAKERS IN GRASS

Oh my God, do you know anyone there?

BOOTS IN MUD

No but I don't need to, I'm incredibly empathetic, I *feel* their pain.

SNEAKERS IN GRASS

Oh. Okay.

BOOTS IN MUD
Where are you going?

SNEAKERS IN GRASS
That way.

BOOTS IN MUD
What? Why? Don't you know what's happening?

SNEAKERS IN GRASS
Yes, I already told you I know-

BOOTS IN MUD
Don't you care?

SNEAKERS IN GRASS
Yes of course I care, I just- I don't want to go.

BOOTS IN MUD
Well, I think it's clear who deserves to be under this tree more.

SNEAKERS IN GRASS
What the hell is your problem?

BOOTS IN MUD
You, people like you. People are suffering-

SNEAKERS IN GRASS
People are always suffering-

BOOTS IN MUD
And you just don't care-

SNEAKERS IN GRASS
Did you even know what was happening before a couple days ago?

BOOTS IN MUD
... That's not the point-

SNEAKERS IN GRASS
You didn't even know about it until a couple days ago!

BOOTS IN MUD
That doesn't matter, at least I'm trying!

SNEAKERS IN GRASS
Do you even really care?

BOOTS IN MUD
Yeah, obviously...but that doesn't even matter if I'm actually doing something. I'm not just running away.

SNEAKERS IN GRASS
I'm not a bad person for wanting a different life.

BOOTS IN MUD
Just not as good of one.

SNEAKERS IN GRASS
What gives you the right to say-

BOOTS IN MUD
Don't you think of anyone but yourself?

SNEAKERS IN GRASS
You're one to talk.

BOOTS IN MUD
Excuse me?

SNEAKERS IN GRASS
I'm just saying-

BOOTS IN MUD
Saying what?

SNEAKERS IN GRASS
I'm just saying, I'm not the one who tried to claim a tree and kick a stranger out into a storm.

BOOTS IN MUD
What I'm going to do makes me a good person.

SNEAKERS IN GRASS
Are you sure it will?

BOOTS IN MUD
Are you sure it won't?

Pause

SNEAKERS IN GRASS

Maybe we should get going, you know it's dangerous to be under a tree during a storm.

BOOTS IN MUD

Yes, I'm well aware of that. But the chances of that happening are slim to none.

SNEAKERS IN GRASS

The chance is always there though. No one thinks it will happen to them until it does.

BOOTS IN MUD

You just want the tree all to yourself.

SNEAKERS IN GRASS

I don't care about the stupid tree.

BOOTS IN MUD

How about you leave first then?

SNEAKERS IN GRASS

I don't want to.

BOOTS IN MUD

Why do you want to go that way anyways?

SNEAKERS IN GRASS

I'm not sure. I'm afraid of what might happen if I don't. I want to find something.

BOOTS IN MUD

What?

SNEAKERS IN GRASS

I don't know yet.

BOOTS IN MUD

Don't you think that's a little privileged?

SNEAKERS IN GRASS

I never said it wasn't. *Slight pause.* Do you have a place to stay that way?

BOOTS IN MUD

Yes I have a place.

SNEAKERS IN GRASS

In the outskirts or in the middle?

BOOTS IN MUD

In the middle...

SNEAKERS IN GRASS

A shelter?

BOOTS IN MUD

...A hotel.

SNEAKERS IN GRASS

Oh wow niceeee...with your money or your parents?

BOOTS IN MUD

... My parents.

SNEAKERS IN GRASS

Don't you think that's a little privileged?

BOOTS IN MUD

Why are you attacking me?

SNEAKERS IN GRASS

You started it-

BOOTS IN MUD

You continued it. You're not special for acting self righteous.

SNEAKERS IN GRASS

You are one to talk.

BOOTS IN MUD

Me doing something wrong doesn't give you the right to do it back.

SNEAKERS IN GRASS

So you admit you were wrong.

BOOTS IN MUD

I-I never said I was perfect.

SNEAKERS IN GRASS

Sigh. You're right, I'm sorry. I think it's great what you're doing.

BOOTS IN MUD

Thanks. *Pause.* Do you think I seem fake?

SNEAKERS IN GRASS

It doesn't really matter what I think.

BOOTS IN MUD

Of course it matters what you think, it matters what everyone thinks, anyone who says otherwise is either a liar or an idiot.

SNEAKERS IN GRASS

Fine, you seem a little fake. *Slight pause.* *BOOTS IN MUD looks towards the sky in silence.* Am I right?

BOOTS IN MUD

I'm not sure. Maybe a little.

SNEAKERS IN GRASS

We're all a little fake.

BOOTS IN MUD

That doesn't make me feel better. *Pause.* I'm so tired.

SNEAKERS IN GRASS

Me too. *Slight pause.* The rain makes you sleepy, did you know that?

BOOTS IN MUD

I think my mom told me something like that once.

SNEAKERS IN GRASS

Yeah it has to do with the barometric pressure. There's less oxygen in the air.

BOOTS IN MUD

I think I feel that.

SNEAKERS IN GRASS

Me too. *Pause.* Is it bad that I don't want to do what you're doing?

BOOTS IN MUD

I don't know. I'm not really the person to ask.

SNEAKERS IN GRASS

Who is then?

BOOTS IN MUD

I don't know.

SNEAKERS IN GRASS

I don't want to go the wrong way.

BOOTS IN MUD

Then don't.

SNEAKERS IN GRASS

What makes you right and me wrong anyways?

BOOTS IN MUD

You tell me.

SNEAKERS IN GRASS

Slight pause. What's that supposed to mean?

BOOTS IN MUD

I didn't say anything.

SNEAKERS IN GRASS

You didn't?

BOOTS IN MUD

No.

SNEAKERS IN GRASS

Oh. *Pause.* I want to wake up and it to be sunny.

BOOTS IN MUD

I want to wake up and not know anything.

SNEAKERS IN GRASS

Be five again.

BOOTS IN MUD

My shoulders feel heavy.

SNEAKERS IN GRASS

It's the rain.

BOOTS IN MUD

Yeah, probably.

Pause

BOOTS IN MUD

Do you regret anything?

SNEAKERS IN GRASS

Not yet.

BOOTS IN MUD
When?

SNEAKERS IN GRASS
Any day now. You?

BOOTS IN MUD
I can't remember.

SNEAKERS IN GRASS
You will.

BOOTS IN MUD
When?

SNEAKERS IN GRASS
Any day now.

Pause

SNEAKERS IN GRASS
If lightning hits this tree, we could be free.

BOOTS IN MUD
That's no way to think

SNEAKERS IN GRASS
I know, I'm just tired.

BOOTS IN MUD
You need to wake up.

SNEAKERS IN GRASS
You first.

BOOTS IN MUD
I'm not strong enough.

SNEAKERS IN GRASS
I'm not enough.

BOOTS IN MUD
Says who?

SNEAKERS IN GRASS
Says you.

BOOTS IN MUD
Who knows what's true.

Pause

SNEAKERS IN GRASS
We better get going.

BOOTS IN MUD
It's still raining pretty hard.

SNEAKERS IN GRASS
Maybe we should stay a little longer.

BOOTS IN MUD
Yes, I agree.

The girls sit down in their patches.

BOOTS IN MUD
Our clothes are going to get dirty.

SNEAKERS IN GRASS
They were going to eventually anyways.

BOOTS IN MUD
I'm so hungry.

SNEAKERS IN GRASS
Do you want a granola bar? I brought extras.

BOOTS IN MUD
Yeah sure, thanks.

BOOTS IN MUD takes a bite

BOOTS IN MUD
This isn't bad.

SNEAKERS IN GRASS
Thanks, it's organic.

The girls sit silently together eating their granola bars. The rain keeps pouring down. The stage fades to black.