

A TALE FROM THE NORTH WOODS

A one-act fairy tale by
Lynn-Steven Johanson

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www.youthplays.com
info@youthplays.com
424-703-5315

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

THE GREAT GOOGAH, an elf wizard who is the wisest one in the forest.

FOGEL, a raven who acts as the Great Googah's assistant.

GRANDPA GNOME, an old man who is hard of hearing.

GRANDMA GNOME, his wife and Mother Gnome's mother.

FATHER GNOME, a wise and tolerant healer.

MOTHER GNOME, his wife who is a bigot.

LEELA, their daughter, around age 10.

KROOKY, their precocious son, around age 7.

UNCLE ILYA, a hot-headed gnome zealot.

A GANG OF GNOMES

FATHER TROLL, the leader of the pack and a bigot.

MOTHER TROLL, his wife and a tolerant individual who is unwell.

SHEEBOK, their daughter, around age 10.

MOOSHLOK, their son, who wants to run with the pack.

GRODOK, an injured troll.

A PACK OF TROLLS

GREAT-GREAT-GRANDFATHER GNOME

AN OLD GNOME WOMAN

AN OLD TROLL WOMAN

SETTING

The Great North Woods. A long time ago.

Prologue: A place deep in the heart of the North Woods.
Scene 1: A clearing in the woods.
Scene 2: Next to the gnome family's tree.
Scene 3: Outside the troll family's cave.
Scene 4: A clearing in the woods; the next day.
Scene 5: The dwelling place of the Great Googah.
Scene 6: Next to the gnome family's tree.
Scene 7: Outside the troll family's cave.
Epilogue: A place deep in the heart of the North Woods.

DEDICATION

For Aaron, Erikka, and Trevor

PROLOGUE

(A place deep in the heart of the North Woods. It is evening, and the moon illuminates the forest casting large and somewhat foreboding shadows over the stage. A figure is seen emerging from the shadows. It is an OLD GNOME WOMAN. Her outline and movement create the image of a very human character, although she is dwarfed by the size of the vegetation. When she reaches a point downstage, she stops and is bathed in a pool of warm light. Her white hair, wizened face, and smile reveal a kind, friendly person.)

OLD GNOME WOMAN: *(To audience:)* A long time ago, when the waters ran pure and the forests grew untouched by man, an area known as the North Woods was alive with wildlife of all kinds. Creatures great and small flourished there—bears, elk and wolves roamed freely through the dense forest while birds of all kinds lived in the trees that stretched for hundreds and hundreds of miles. But the animals were not alone. For deep in the forest lived beings rarely if ever seen by the eyes of man. Fantastical creatures. Elves, fairies, goblins, nymphs, gnomes, ogres, and trolls. They all lived in harmony with nature. But sadly, not all of them lived in harmony with one another. You see, the North Woods had been home to gnomes and trolls as far back as anyone could remember, and for many years they shared the forest. But then some unfortunate things happened, and over time, the gnomes and the trolls grew to hate each other. You see, it all started when the gnomes— *(Looks curiously at the audience and playfully gives them a tease:)* Oh! Wait a moment. I'll bet you don't know about gnomes and trolls, do you? Ah, but you will. Our tale begins in a clearing in the woods shortly after the gnomes fled north to escape a forest fire that destroyed their homes.

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(She turns and disappears into the darkness as the lights fade to black. End of Prologue.)

SCENE 1

(A clearing in the woods. There is a large mushroom practical for sitting, tall plants and weeds with thicker vegetation upstage suitable for concealing characters. Voices of children playing. LEELA, a gnome girl, enters running. She is being chased by KROOKY, her younger brother.)

LEELA: You're it!

KROOKY: You can't get away from me! You're as slow as a troll.

LEELA: *(Placing the mushroom between herself and Krooky:)* Oh, yeah? You're more than "it." You're a twit!

KROOKY: Oooo! I'll get you for that!

LEELA: *(Laughing:)* Try it.

(They chase around the mushroom and Krooky catches Leela, tagging her so hard on the shoulder that she loses her balance and falls to the ground.)

Owww! You didn't have to tag me so hard, Krooky. That hurt!

KROOKY: You asked for it.

LEELA: Did not!

KROOKY: Did too!

LEELA: *(Rising and seeing her dress:)* Look what you've done.

KROOKY: What?

LEELA: You got my dress all dirty. Mama just washed this dress yesterday, and now she's going to be mad at me for getting it dirty. *(Begins brushing off the dirt:)* It's all your fault.

KROOKY: Is not.

(Attempts to brush dirt off her.)

LEELA: Don't touch me!

KROOKY: What are we doing back here, anyway? Papa told us not to go this far into the forest anymore.

LEELA: I know, but I need to find my sketchbook. I think I may have left it here yesterday.

KROOKY: I want to go.

LEELA: Why?

(Krooky begins looking around for it.)

KROOKY: Nothing. Do you know where you left it?

LEELA: If I knew where I left it, I'd know where to look. I have to find it. It has all my drawings in it.

KROOKY: I'm looking, I'm looking.

(He looks in a very cursory fashion.)

I don't see it.

LEELA: You're finished looking already?

KROOKY: Uh-huh.

LEELA: Why are you in such a hurry to leave?

KROOKY: Something I heard Papa say to Mama.

LEELA: What?

KROOKY: They thought I was asleep, but I was just pretending. I like to do that so I can hear them talk about stuff we aren't supposed to hear.

LEELA: Well, what did he say?

KROOKY: Moving this far north puts us close to troll country.

LEELA: Troll country?

KROOKY: Yeah. Come on, Leela. Let's get out of here. I'm starting to feel creepy.

LEELA: Not until I find —

KROOKY: You look for it if you want to, but I'm going to go see the baby rabbits.

LEELA: You can go see the baby rabbits anytime. I have to find my book so I can show it to Grandpa and Grandma.

(She looks at him and he looks at her. Nothing. She begins looking for the sketchbook again.)

KROOKY: I'm leaving. *(No answer:)* You can come along if you want. *(No answer:)* I'll be at the rabbit's den. *(Still no answer:)* See ya.

LEELA: Bye.

(Krooky exits.)

Wait until he needs my help with something. *(Continues searching:)* I don't understand where it could have gone. I thought sure I left it here. *(Seeing the tree, an idea pops into her head:)* Maybe if I climb that tree, I'll be able to see it.

(Leela climbs the tree and begins looking around the area. [Note: use appropriate ad-libs while climbing the tree.]

I can see a lot of things up here. *(She gasps when she sees something coming toward her:)* Oh my!

(Two trolls, MOOSHLOK and his younger sister SHEEBOK, enter walking hunched over in almost ape-like movements. Each one snorts, sniffs, coughs and scratches grotesquely, and they speak in growling voices.)

MOOSHLOK: *(Sniffing the air:)* Something was just here.

SHEEBOK: What is it?

MOOSHLOK: I don't know. I don't recognize the scent.

SHEEBOK: *(Dropping her scary behavior, she speaks as normally as the gnomes:)* I don't want to do this anymore.

(Sheebok drops her shoulder bag onto the ground and straightens up into an erect posture.)

MOOSHLOK: You have to. It's our protection against danger.

SHEEBOK: It's hard.

MOOSHLOK: Everyone must believe trolls are scary creatures. It's the law of the pack. Mama had to learn to be scary and so do you.

(Sheebok crosses to a tall piece of vegetation and pulls a vine from it. She begins jumping rope.)

What are you doing?

SHEEBOK: What's it look like?

(Satisfied that no one is watching, Mooshlok drops his scary facade and he speaks to Sheebok in a confidential tone.)

MOOSHLOK: You can't do that here. That's not being scary. I'm going to tell Papa.

SHEEBOK: Tell him. See if I care.

MOOSHLOK: I will, and you'll be in trouble with more than just Papa. You'll be in trouble with the Troll Elders.

SHEEBOK: So.

MOOSHLOK: No wonder they don't let girls run with the pack.

SHEEBOK: Oh, yeah. Well someday girls will get to run with the pack – maybe one will even be the leader.

MOOSHLOK: Ha! *(He drops back into his scary mode and speaks again with a growling voice:)* Come on. We have to go.

SHEEBOK: You go. I don't want to.

MOOSHLOK: All right. You stay here and act like a gnome baby!

(Mooshlok exits. Sheebok continues to jump rope as Leela watches her. While trying to adjust her position, she loses her balance and drops out of the tree.)

LEELA: Oh, no!

(Instinctively, Sheebok goes into her scary mode of behavior. Leela picks herself up and two girls begin circling each other.)

It's all right. I won't hurt you.

SHEEBOK: What were you doing up there?

LEELA: Looking for something.

SHEEBOK: You were spying on us.

LEELA: No, I didn't mean to. I was looking for something, that's all.

SHEEBOK: Looking for what?

LEELA: My sketchbook. I left it here yesterday when Krooky and I started chasing a butterfly. Have you seen it?

SHEEBOK: *(Crosses to the mushroom; reaching up inside, she pulls out Leela's sketchbook:)* Is this it?

LEELA: Yes!

(Leela runs to her and retrieves it.)

SHEEBOK: I put it there so nothing would happen to it.

LEELA: Oh, thank you.

SHEEBOK: I saw you yesterday.

LEELA: You did?

SHEEBOK: I was hiding in the tall grass behind that rock. I watched you.

LEELA: You were spying on me?

SHEEBOK: I was hiding. I was scared.

LEELA: Well, you don't have to be scared of me.

SHEEBOK: I looked at your pictures.

LEELA: You did?

SHEEBOK: Uh-huh. You draw really good. I liked the deer best.

LEELA: They're my favorite.

SHEEBOK: I like the deer, too. But I don't get to watch them very long because my brother thinks it's fun to spook them. One look at a troll and they run away.

LEELA: You're a troll?

(Leela begins backing up.)

SHEEBOK: Uh-huh.

LEELA: A troll?

SHEEBOK: What's the matter?

LEELA: My mama told me that trolls like to eat our faces and do cruel things like set our pants on fire.

SHEEBOK: No, we...are you a gnome?

(Leela shakes her head "yes" and Sheebok starts backing off.)

LEELA: Uh-huh.

SHEEBOK: My papa said gnomes hate trolls, and they throw rocks at us and make shoes out of our skins.

LEELA: We don't do that.

SHEEBOK: You don't?

LEELA: Gnomes are good. My papa is a healer. He helps gnomes get well if they get sick. He helps the animals when they get sick, too. Do you have a papa?

SHEEBOK: Uh-huh.

LEELA: What does he do?

SHEEBOK: He's the leader of the pack.

LEELA: (*Not registering:*) Oh. Can I ask you something?

SHEEBOK: Uh-huh.

LEELA: Do you have a name?

SHEEBOK: It's Sheebok. What's yours?

LEELA: Leela.

SHEEBOK: Leela. Leela. I like that name.

LEELA: Thank you for finding my sketchbook.

SHEEBOK: You're welcome.

LEELA: I wanted to show these to my grandpa and grandma when they come to visit today.

SHEEBOK: Since you draw so well, do you suppose you could draw a picture of me?

LEELA: Sure.

SHEEBOK: And...maybe we could meet here again tomorrow...

LEELA: I'd like that.

(A scream from Krooky and a growl from Mooshlok are heard from offstage. Krooky runs on chased by Mooshlok.)

KROOKY: Help. Help. Run for your life! He's going to eat me.

MOOSHLOK: *(Growling:)* I'm gonna get you, gnome baby!

(Over protests from Leela and Sheebok, Mooshlok pursues Krooky around the stage. There is quite a commotion as pandemonium sets in. Then, onto the scene come GRANDPA and GRANDMA GNOME.)

GRANDMA: *(Shrieking:)* The grandchildren!

GRANDPA: *(Yelling:)* LEAVE THEM ALONE, YOU STUPID CREATURES!

GRANDMA: *(Yelling to Grandpa:)* QUICK! THE OOGA-BOOGA ROOT!

LEELA: NO!

(Mooshlok turns on Grandpa and begins to move toward him. But Grandpa pulls an "ooga-booga root" from his satchel, breaks it in two and tosses it toward the trolls. It releases smoke, and Mooshlok and Sheebok immediately start coughing uncontrollably and rubbing their eyes.)

KROOKY: Grandma!

(Grandma grabs Krooky and Leela by the hands.)

GRANDMA: Come on. Let's go!

GRANDPA: Huh?

GRANDMA: *(Yelling for his benefit:)* LET'S GO!

(Grandpa, Grandma, Krooky, and Leela with her sketchbook exit running while Sheebok and Mooshlok are left coughing on stage. End of Scene 1.)

SCENE 2

(Next to the gnome family's tree. It is shortly after they have arrived home accompanied by Grandpa Gnome. Leela and Krooky are alone on stage. Leela is busy sketching a picture of Sheebok. Krooky is practicing pulling his ooga-booga root out of the bag on his belt. He looks like a western gunslinger practicing his fast draw.)

KROOKY: That troll will never try to eat me again. Watch this!

(He quickly pulls the root from his bag, holding it straight out like a firearm.)

Pretty fast, huh?

LEELA: Grandpa gave you that ooga-booga root to use as a last resort.

KROOKY: Yeah, yeah.

LEELA: They're very rare and only work one time, so put it away before you break it.

(Krooky replaces the root in his bag.)

KROOKY: I don't believe you were talking to a troll.

LEELA: Well I was.

KROOKY: What was it like? Did it slobber all over you?

LEELA: No.

KROOKY: *(Looking over Leela's shoulder at her drawing:)* Hey, that's pretty good. It looks just like them.

LEELA: I hope she likes it. I'd like to be her friend.

KROOKY: Friend? Are you crazy? Who ever heard of a gnome being friends with a troll?

LEELA: I'm not crazy.

KROOKY: What if she turns on you and bites a big hunk out of your face? You'll have to wear a bag over your head the rest of your life!

LEELA: (*Angrily closes her sketchbook:*) She wouldn't do that. You don't know anything about trolls.

KROOKY: Oh, yeah?

LEELA: Yeah.

KROOKY: Well, nobody's going to play with you. They'll be afraid they'll get troll germs because you're a troll-lover!

LEELA: (*Rises to confront him:*) Stop it.

KROOKY: (*Teasing:*) Troll-lover, troll-lover. Nah-nah-nah-nah-nah-nah.

LEELA: (*Grabbing him:*) You stop calling me names!

(As they wrestle to the ground, yelling and grunting, MOTHER GNOME enters with a basket of berries.)

I told you to stop it. You take it back!

KROOKY: Get off me. Leave me alone! You asked for it!

MOTHER GNOME: What in the world— (*Moving in to break it up:*) You two stop fighting right now. Get up off the ground. Ugh! Look at you! (*Pulling them up:*) All right, which one of you started it this time?

LEELA: He was calling me names.

MOTHER GNOME: Is that so, Krooky?

KROOKY: Sort of.

MOTHER GNOME: What did he call you?

LEELA: A troll-lover.

MOTHER GNOME: (*Her eyes flash at Krooky:*) You should be ashamed of yourself. Calling your sister a name like that.

KROOKY: Well, it's not my fault she made friends with a troll today.

MOTHER GNOME: What?!

KROOKY: She made friends with a troll.

LEELA: So what if I did?

MOTHER GNOME: (*To Krooky:*) Go into the house and get your father.

KROOKY: (*Relieved he is off the hook:*) Okay.

(Krooky exits.)

MOTHER GNOME: What does he mean you made friends with a troll?

LEELA: I did.

MOTHER GNOME: How could you? After all you've been told about trolls, you have to try to make friends with one. Don't you know how dangerous trolls are to us? They're stupid, uncivilized brutes who hate gnomes. And I will not allow you to go near them do you hear me?

LEELA: But, Mama —

(FATHER GNOME, Grandpa, Grandma and Krooky enter.)

MOTHER GNOME: Did you hear what happened?

FATHER GNOME: Grandpa and Grandma were on their way over here when they saw trolls chasing Leela and Krooky. Grandpa had to use an ooga-booga root so they could all escape.

MOTHER GNOME: Oh my. (*Hugs Grandpa:*) Thank you, Papa. (*Hugs Grandma:*) Thank you, Mama.

GRANDMA: I'm just glad we came along. Wait until Uncle Ilya hears about this. He'll get rid of those creatures once and for all. We have a right to live in peace and not be threatened.

GRANDPA: You should have seen them. (*Imitates the trolls coughing:*) I hope they coughed their fool heads off.

LEELA: (*Protesting:*) No.

MOTHER GNOME: This whole thing seems to have started when Leela tried to make friends with a troll. Have you ever heard of such a thing –

FATHER GNOME: What? (*To Leela:*) Tell me what happened.

LEELA: I talked to a troll named Sheebok. She found my sketchbook and took care of it for me. She wanted me to draw her picture. Look.

(Showing him her sketchbook:)

FATHER GNOME: Weren't you scared?

(Looks at the picture she has drawn.)

KROOKY: I was. A troll chased me, and tried to –

FATHER GNOME: (*To Grandpa, who is a little hard of hearing:*) Would you mind showing Krooky how to feed the mice?

GRANDPA GNOME: Weed the rice? That's hard work for a –

GRANDMA GNOME: No. He said, "Feed the mice."

GRANDPA GNOME: Heed advice? What are you talking about?

GRANDMA GNOME: "Feed – the – mice."

GRANDPA GNOME: Oh! Oh, feed the mice. Sure.

GRANDMA GNOME: Come on, Krooky.

KROOKY: Ohhhh, I want to see her get yelled at.

(Grandpa, Grandma, and Krooky exit.)

FATHER GNOME: Whatever possessed you to talk with a troll?

MOTHER GNOME: I can't understand why you would do such a thing.

LEELA: Trolls aren't stupid—they're smart. They act the way they do to scare everything away from them. They're really a lot like us.

MOTHER GNOME: *(Scoffing:)* Ugh!

FATHER GNOME: Hm. I have to admit, I've never seen a troll. I only know they have a reputation for abusing gnomes. I've always lived far away from them.

MOTHER GNOME: Well, I've never actually seen one, and I don't want to either. My great-grandfather was captured by a pack of trolls when he was quite old. He said they dragged him into their damp, smoky cave, put him in a cage, and then set his pants on fire. It's a miracle he was able to escape with his life. Now look, honey. Maybe this troll did seem nice. I'm not doubting your word. But she's a troll. She might have acted just fine this one time, but they're mean and dangerous. There are stories that they've eaten the faces of gnomes! You can't trust them.

LEELA: But Mama, I like Sheebok. I know we could be friends.

MOTHER GNOME: Very soon there's going to be a gnome family living over the hill under the big oak tree. They have a girl about your age. You can be friends with her.

LEELA: But—

MOTHER GNOME: I don't want you going near that troll again—is that understood?

LEELA: If you've never met one, then how do you know what they're like?

MOTHER GNOME: You try to talk sense into her. I'm going inside.

(She picks up her basket of berries and exits.)

LEELA: Mama doesn't understand.

FATHER GNOME: I know. Your mother is very frightened of trolls, and like all of us, she's been told stories about what trolls have done to gnomes.

LEELA: Is it wrong for me to want a friend?

FATHER GNOME: Of course not. But your mother and I are concerned. We don't want anything bad to happen to you, that's all.

LEELA: If gnomes would just get to know some trolls, they'd understand them. Trolls think all gnomes are mean. If they knew us, they'd find out it isn't true.

FATHER GNOME: Now don't tell your mother this, but I don't believe all those horrible stories about trolls eating gnomes and setting them on fire. None of the forest creatures I've encountered is that evil. *(Ponders a moment:)* I think it's possible that a few trolls may have given the rest a bad name. Gnomes know so little about trolls because we've always lived

far away from them. The forest fire has changed all that. So until we know better, we have to be cautious. Right?

LEELA: I guess so.

FATHER GNOME: Let's go find Grandpa and Grandma.

LEELA: I think I'd rather stay here for a while.

FATHER GNOME: All right.

(Father Gnome exits as Leela contemplates her parents' reactions. End of Scene 2.)

SCENE 3

(Outside the troll family's dwelling, a cave. It is located in a rocky area of the forest. A pack of trolls enters led by FATHER TROLL. Their ape-like movements are accompanied by snorting, growling and mumbling. They have come back from the hunt for food and carry bags over their shoulders. Suddenly, they drop their grotesque behavior and straighten into more human-like postures.)

FATHER TROLL: *(Yelling:)* Sashok! I'm home. *(No answer:)* Sashok!

MOTHER TROLL: *(Her voice from inside the cave:)* I hear you. Just a minute.

(MOTHER TROLL enters. She has a rounder figure than the other trolls and walks rather slowly.)

Oh! You didn't say the entire pack was here. Did you have a good hunt, boys?

(General agreement is voiced by the trolls.)

FIRST TROLL: We didn't get any milk, thanks to Grodok.

GRODOK: *(Who looks worse for wear:)* Oh, come on. You've been rubbing it in all day.

MOTHER TROLL: What happened? I was going to make cheese.

FIRST TROLL: Grodok tried to milk a sleeping moose.

FATHER TROLL: With cold hands!

THIRD TROLL: They'll wake up every time.

GRODOK: I didn't know my hands were cold.

MOTHER TROLL: So, the moose woke up?

SECOND TROLL: The moose jumped up...

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(He starts laughing.)

THIRD TROLL: ...and gave Grodok a kick, the likes of which you've never seen.

GRODOK: *(His hand goes to his sore rear:)* It still hurts!

(The other trolls laugh.)

SECOND TROLL: You should have seen him flying through the air.

GRODOK: I can hardly move my tail.

(Mother Troll steps toward Grodok, who backs away.)

No-o-o-o-o!! I'll be all right.

(Grotesque troll noises are heard offstage.)

FATHER TROLL: Mm. Sounds like the children.

(Mooshlok and Sheebok enter, stop and drop their assumed behaviors.)

MOOSHLOK: Hi, Mama. Hi, Papa.

SHEEBOK: Hi.

FATHER TROLL: Say hello to the pack.

(Mooshlok and Sheebok exchange greetings with members of the pack.)

FIRST TROLL: Say, you're getting pretty big.

(He looks at Mooshlok and transforms into his grotesque stance as a playful challenge. Mooshlok does the same, and they start circling, growling and snorting, showing off for the rest of the pack. Seeing enough, First Troll stops and straightens into his real self. Mooshlok follows suit. The members of the pack voice their approval by grunting in unison and stamping one foot.)

SECOND TROLL: Won't be long until you start running with us.

FATHER TROLL: *(Puts his arm on Mooshlok's shoulder:)* You hear that?

MOOSHLOK: Guess what I did today?

FATHER TROLL: I don't know.

MOOSHLOK: *(Beaming:)* I scared my first gnomes away.

FIRST TROLL: Gnomes!

(Trolls begin talking amongst themselves.)

THIRD TROLL: We've got gnomes in the neighborhood?

FATHER GNOME: Where did you see them?

MOOSHLOK: Over that way, past the fallen trees.

FATHER TROLL: Did you see them, Sheebok?

SHEEBOK: Uh-huh.

SECOND TROLL: How many of them were there?

MOOSHLOK: Two.

SHEEBOK: But they were little ones.

MOOSHLOK: They weren't all that little. You should have seen them run. I scared the weeneebies out of them.

MOTHER TROLL: *(To Sheebok:)* Did you help your brother?

MOOSHLOK: No. She just sat in the bushes like a bump on a log.

(He gives Sheebok's tail a pull.)

Wimp!

SHEEBOK: Owwww! Mama.

MOTHER TROLL: Stop pulling your sister's tail. That hurts.

FATHER TROLL: *(To the pack:)* It appears we have a gnome problem.

GRONOK: Why are we suddenly plagued with gnomes?

FATHER TROLL: The fire in the south must have driven them north. That means they could be here to stay.

SECOND TROLL: And there could be hundreds of them.

GRONOK: Hundreds?

SECOND TROLL: They'll make our lives miserable.

THIRD TROLL: You know what they're like. They'll steal our food, throw rocks at us—pull all sorts of mean tricks.

FIRST TROLL: They'll make trouble for us every chance they get.

FATHER TROLL: We'll have to find them and drive them away. We need to have an emergency meeting of the Elders tonight. We have to devise a plan. Chulok?

FIRST TROLL: Yes?

FATHER TROLL: Go tell the leader of your brother's pack we have an emergency meeting tonight at the beaver dam. Roonok?

SECOND TROLL: Yes?

FATHER TROLL: Heenok?

THIRD TROLL: Yes?

FATHER TROLL: Go tell the leaders of the river pack and the valley pack about the meeting.

(Second Troll and Third Troll acknowledge him affirmatively.)

We have to band together on this.

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FIRST TROLL: Go on. You'd better go.

(The members of the pack exchange goodbyes and exit.)

MOTHER TROLL: I don't like this.

FATHER TROLL: Neither do I, but something has to be done.

SHEEBOK: Can't we make friends with the gnomes?

FATHER TROLL: That would be the day. You have to understand that gnomes hate us. We just want to be left alone to live in our own part of the forest—to be with our own kind. We've been scaring off others for hundreds of years. That's how we've managed to keep other creatures, like those pesky gnomes, away from us.

MOTHER TROLL: We don't know if all gnomes are bad, dear. Some of them might be good. But you have to remember that they don't like us.

FATHER TROLL: Ahhhh, they're all alike. It was a rare thing for my grandfather to see a gnome this far north. But still, they would turn up every so often and make trouble.

SHEEBOK: How did they do that, Papa?

MOOSHLOK: Everybody knows that.

SHEEBOK: I don't.

FATHER TROLL: They play mean tricks, and do mean things. I'll explain it to you sometime. Then maybe you'll understand.

MOOSHLOK: Can I go with you to the meeting of the Elders tonight?

MOTHER TROLL: It will be late.

MOOSHLOK: Please?

FATHER: Maybe it's time you learn about things. After all, you're almost ready to run with the pack.

MOOSHLOK: Thanks, Dad.

SHEEBOK: What about me?

MOOSHLOK: You're a girl!

SHEEBOK: (*Indignantly:*) So!!

MOTHER TROLL: (*Picking up the bag Father Troll brought home:*) We'll talk about that later. Supper will be ready soon.

MOOSHLOK: What are we having?

MOTHER TROLL: Dandelion salad, porridge, and elderberry pudding. And your father brought you some sunflower seeds for dessert.

MOOSHLOK: Oh, yum!

SHEEBOK: Thank you, Papa.

MOOSHLOK: Yeah, thanks.

SHEEBOK: Sunflower seeds for dessert two days in a row!

(Mooshlok and Sheebok exit.)

MOTHER TROLL: I swear, you're going to spoil those kids!

FATHER TROLL: Yeah, well...

(Mother Troll and Father Troll exit. End of Scene 3.)

SCENE 4

(The clearing in the forest. It is the next day. Leela is sitting on the mushroom sketching in her book. She senses something in the bushes and gets down off the mushroom.)

LEELA: Sheebok? Is that you?

(Sheebok enters tentatively from the bushes with a small purse-like bag on a shoulder strap.)

SHEEBOK: Hi.

LEELA: After what happened yesterday, I didn't know if you would come.

SHEEBOK: I just wanted to make sure it was safe.

LEELA: It's only me.

SHEEBOK: What was that thing yesterday? It burned our eyes so we couldn't see and we couldn't breathe.

LEELA: It was an ooga-booga root. Gnomes use it to escape from danger. My grandpa thought your brother was going to hurt us.

SHEEBOK: It was terrible.

LEELA: Did your brother come with you –

SHEEBOK: No. He's running with –

(Suddenly, she assumes her scary mode of behavior and sniffs the air. It frightens her.)

We have to hide. Hurry!

(Leela and Sheebok run into some thick foliage to hide. As soon as they are no longer visible, a group of gnomes enter led by UNCLE ILYA. They stop and look at the ground.)

FIRST GNOME: Ilya, look. Troll tracks. And gnome tracks.

UNCLE ILYA: They're fresh, too. They can't be more than an hour old.

SECOND GNOME: *(Pointing:)* They came from that direction.

THIRD GNOME: I'd better scout ahead.

UNCLE ILYA: Good idea.

(Third Gnome exits.)

If we're going to start capturing these savages, we have to study their habits so we can figure out a plan. We have to do this right. We can't afford to fail.

SECOND GNOME: They travel in packs. It won't be easy to find one alone.

FIRST GNOME: I don't know about this, Ilya. Can't we start using the ooga-booga roots?

UNCLE ILYA: Most of us don't have them anymore, and they don't even grow in this part of the country. No. We have to get tough with them before they attack us. If we can hold some of their pack hostage, we can show them we can't be intimidated.

FIRST GNOME: What if that doesn't work?

UNCLE ILYA: We can cause rock slides, set booby traps, make their lives miserable. We'll destroy their homes one by one if we have to. No one is going to keep us from living our lives.

GNOMES: Right!

ILYA: Let's go.

(The gnomes follow the tracks out the same direction as the Third Gnome exited. When they are gone, Sheebok and Leela poke their heads out and look around.)

LEELA: Are they gone?

SHEEBOK: *(Sniffing:)* They're gone. Did you hear what they're planning to do?

LEELA: Capture trolls? Destroy their homes? I can't believe it.

SHEEBOK: They might have captured me. The Troll Elders would be very upset if anything like that would happen.

LEELA: My own uncle. Gnomes don't do things like that. We're peaceful.

SHEEBOK: What's that in your hand?

LEELA: Oh. *(Handing her a rolled up piece of paper with a ribbon on it:)* Here. I made this for you.

SHEEBOK: *(Taking it from her:)* Is this what I think it is? *(Removes the ribbon and unrolls it:)* It's a picture of me—and you! That's really good. It looks just like us.

LEELA: I drew it yesterday and finished it today. I hope you like it.

SHEEBOK: I do. Thank you. And I have something for you.

(Sheebok reaches into her bag and removes what appears to be a small book.)

I can't draw like you, but I like to write stories. I wrote this one and made it into a book.

LEELA: I can't wait to read it. Thank you. *(Suddenly aware of danger:)* Wait!

(Leela listens; Sheebok sniffs the air.)

SHEEBOK: *(With great urgency:)* Hide! Quickly.

(Sheebok and Leela run upstage to the hiding place they used previously. As soon as they move, the sounds of scary trolls are heard offstage. The troll pack enters led by Father Troll.)

Mooshlok is along with them. They maintain their scary demeanors throughout the following.)

FATHER TROLL: Here. *(Sniffs the air:)* I smell gnomes.

FIRST TROLL: Many gnomes passed this way not long ago.

SECOND TROLL: So? Ten scare as easily as one.

THIRD TROLL: Maybe if we start hanging them by their boots from tree branches, we can scare them back to where they came from.

SECOND TROLL: *(Laughing:)* I like that. Hang them from the trees!

FIRST TROLL: We'll show them what trolls are made of. Gnomes will never make shoes out of my children's skin.

FATHER TROLL: We'll do whatever it takes. We'll hang them all from trees if we have to.

FIRST TROLL: And if that doesn't work?

FATHER TROLL: Well, let's just say if they want a war, they'll rue the day they were ever born. *(Sniffs:)* The scent goes this way.

(The troll pack exits in the same direction as the gnomes did. When they are gone, Sheebok and Leela come out of hiding. Both are upset by what they heard.)

SHEEBOK: Papa. I can't believe it.

LEELA: That was your father?

SHEEBOK: Uh-huh. He's supposed be home taking care of my mother. She's sick.

LEELA: Why do grownups have to act this way?

SHEEBOK: I want to have you for my friend, but my papa said I couldn't. He said gnomes are vicious and want to hurt us.

LEELA: My mama told me the same thing. She said trolls are uncivilized brutes who hate gnomes.

SHEEBOK: Leela, what's a war?

LEELA: It's when there's a big fight because one group wants something and the other group doesn't. And in order to win, they try to destroy each other.

SHEEBOK: Destroy? You mean they kill each other?

LEELA: Uh-huh.

SHEEBOK: That's terrible. It doesn't make any sense.

LEELA: I know.

SHEEBOK: What can we do?

LEELA: Well...

SHEEBOK: I wish there was somebody who could help us.

LEELA: I don't know of—wait! I do know somebody who might be able to help.

SHEEBOK: Who?

LEELA: The Great Googah. He's the wisest one in the whole forest.

SHEEBOK: You know the great elf wizard?

LEELA: Well, no. You know about the Great Googah?

SHEEBOK: Everybody's heard of the Great Googah. But what makes you think he'll help us? Someone that important probably won't have time for you and me. Besides, how would we find him? Nobody knows where he lives.

LEELA: Papa said that he lives in a secret place. And he won't see just anybody, only those who really need his help. He has a special way of finding them.

SHEEBOK: What do we do?

LEELA: I don't know.

SHEEBOK: Maybe we should try to get his attention?

LEELA: How?

SHEEBOK: Well, maybe we could do a "frumbuh."

LEELA: What's a frumbuh? I've never heard of it.

SHEEBOK: It's something trolls do—a group of trolls get together and chant and dance to get something to happen. Like this. (*Sheebok demonstrates, dancing and chanting:*) Ooooh, Great Googah, wisest one in the forest, ooooh. (*Stops:*) Come on Leela, do it with me.

(Leela joins in.)

LEELA/SHEEBOK: (*Starting their ritual:*) Ooooh, Great Googah, wisest one in the forest, ooooh. We desperately need your help, oh wise one, ooooh.

(End of Scene 4.)

SCENE 5

(The dwelling place of the Great Googah. GOOGAH is asleep, snoring loudly. FOGEL bounces up and down on his perch, awakening Googah from his nap.)

GOOGAH: What is it, Fogel?

FOGEL: Aw! Aw!

GOOGAH: *(Looks toward the hourglass:)* Oh, you want me to check the magic book? Thank you for reminding me.

(Fogel stretches out his wings and moves his head forward and backward as if to acknowledge Googah with a "you're welcome." Googah walks to the large hourglass and turns it over. Next to it is a folio-sized manuscript with a sparkling cover. He picks it up, carries it to his "sitting place" and opens it to the appropriate page. Its glow illuminates Googah's face.)

Who should I see first this afternoon? Let see. Hmm. An elf who wants to be taller.

(Googah looks toward Fogel, who shakes his tail toward Googah.)

FOGEL: Aw!

GOOGAH: A group of young wood nymphs stealing coal from a goblin.

FOGEL: *(Shaking his tail at him again:)* Aw!

GOOGAH: An ogre who thinks nobody likes him.

FOGEL: *(Shaking his tail at Googah a third time:)* Aw!

GOOGAH: There's so many problems in the world, Fogel. It's hard to know where to start.

(Fogel turns to Googah and moves his head forward and backward.)

Being the wisest one in the forest isn't as easy as it used to be.

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(He looks back to the book.)

Hmmm. What else do we have here? Oooo! A gnome girl and a troll girl whose parents won't let them be friends. *(To Fogel:)* The new beginning – it's happening!

FOGEL: *(Stretching his wings:)* Aw!

GOOGAH: You're right, Fogel. I think we'd better look into this one first. *(Laying down the book, he closes his eyes, raises his arms above his head and speaks:)* Two young girls,
A troll and gnome,
Bring them to
My secret home.

(A flash and a cloud of smoke from which Leela and Sheebok emerge.)

LEELA: Where are we?

(They freeze.)

SHEEBOK: What happened?

LEELA: I don't know, but it sure got dark all of a sudden.

LEELA/SHEEBOK: *(Seeing the great one:)* Who's that?

LEELA: Do you suppose it might be "him"?

SHEEBOK: I don't know. I've never seen an elf wizard before.

LEELA: Ask him.

SHEEBOK: You ask him.

GOOGAH: You wanted to see me?

LEELA: Are you the Great Googah?

SHEEBOK: The great elf wizard?

GOOGAH: I am. And you must be Leela and Sheebok.

SHEEBOK: You know our names!

GOOGAH: I'd be a fine wizard if I didn't.

FOGEL: Aw! Aw!

(Leela and Sheebok gasp, as they have not seen Fogel.)

GOOGAH: Don't let him frighten you. That's Fogel, my assistant. He's my eyes and ears on the outside world.

SHEEBOK: He must be pretty smart.

FOGEL: Aw!

LEELA: How did you know we needed to see you?

GOOGAH: I'll let you in on a little secret. Anytime someone really needs my help, their names appear in this magic book. *(Showing them the book:)* You see, here you are, right here. That's how I knew you needed to speak with me.

LEELA: Wow!

SHEEBOK: That's a pretty long list.

GOOGAH: Everyday there are more and more names that appear in this book. I see a lot more than I used to. Everyone seems to have problems, and I'm the one they want to talk to.

LEELA: Because you're the wisest one in the whole forest, right?

GOOGAH: Once every two or three hundred years an elf is born with a very special gift, one who is destined to become a googah. I happened to be one of those lucky few.

LEELA: You're two hundred years old?

GOOGAH: No, I'm only a hundred ninety-two. Some of my fellow wizards refer to me "the kid."

FOGEL: Aw! Aw!

GOOGAH: *(To Fogel:)* Mind your manners!

SHEEBOK: Can you change the world?

GOOGAH: No, I'm afraid I can't do that. But I can give you advice and help you to make wise decisions. So, you want to be friends, huh?

SHEEBOK: Yes.

LEELA: But our parents won't let us, because I'm a gnome and she's a troll.

SHEEBOK: It isn't fair.

GOOGAH: I see.

LEELA: And my mama says that trolls do things like eat our faces and set our pants on fire.

SHEEBOK: And my papa says that gnomes are bad and make shoes out of our skin.

LEELA: And we're afraid there's going to be a war between gnomes and trolls.

SHEEBOK: That would be horrible. I'm afraid that—

GOOGAH: Now, calm down. Calm down, now. You don't have to be afraid.

SHEEBOK: We don't?

GOOGAH: No. You see, I know all about those stories you've heard, and you know what? They aren't true.

LEELA: You mean those things didn't happen?

GOOGAH: No, not the way everyone thinks. It all started out as one big misunderstanding, and some dumb luck.

SHEEBOK: Dumb luck. What's that?

GOOGAH: Follow me and I'll show you. Both of you stand over here.

(Leela and Sheebok follow Googah to the side of the stage.)

LEELA: What are you going to do?

GOOGAH: I am going to let you see into the past.

SHEEBOK: Really?

GOOGAH: That's right.

LEELA: How can you do that?

GOOGAH: I can't reveal that. Oooboo forbids me to tell anyone.

LEELA: Who's "Oooboo"?

GOOGAH: The U-B-E-W. The United Brotherhood of Elf Wizards. Their rules are very strict.

(He walks to center stage.)

Now, you have to be very quiet.

(He closes his eyes and raises his arms.)

Into the past
 We need to go.
 The truth at last
 They now must know.
 Make these two wise
 Despite their youth
 And cut through lies
 That hide the truth.

(There is a clap of thunder followed by tinkling sounds as the back wall reveals a location with a large tree. GREAT-GREAT-GRANDFATHER GNOME, who is puffing on his pipe, enters

slowly, walks to the tree. He yawns and sits down against the tree and goes to sleep with his pipe in his mouth.)

LEELA: Who's that?

GOOGAH: It's your great-great-grandfather. It's been a very tiring day and he's decided to take a nap. Do you see what's in his mouth?

LEELA: It's his pipe.

GOOGAH: Yes, and watch what happens.

(The pipe fall from Great-Great-Grandfather's mouth and lands on his lap.)

LEELA: It fell out of his mouth.

GOOGAH: And landed on his pants.

(Googah raises his arm, and the lights dim down and back up on the scene indicating a small jump in time.)

LEELA: Oh, no!

GOOGAH: And now, five minutes later...

(Smoke is rolling off his pants.)

LEELA: His pants are on fire!

SHEEBOK: Look there!

(A pack of trolls come running in and begin trying to extinguish the fire by beating the fire with their hands.)

GOOGAH: A pack of trolls smelled the smoke and they've come to help him.

(Great-Great-Grandfather wakes up and believes the trolls have set him on fire. He jumps to his feet and begins defending himself. He kicks one troll, stomps on another's foot, pulls another's hair, outmaneuvers the others, and runs offstage)

leaving the trolls hopping up and down, limping, and dealing with their injuries.)

LEELA: What's he doing? He's hurting them!

SHEEBOK: They were just trying to help.

GOOGAH: When your great-great-grandfather awoke, he thought the trolls had set him on fire.

(Googah raises his arm, tinkling sounds are heard, and the back wall goes black.)

LEELA: That's how it really happened?

GOOGAH: That's how it happened. And the gnomes took revenge on the trolls, and the trolls took revenge on the gnomes, and on and on it went. It was an endless series of retaliations that went on until the gnomes finally moved far south so they could live in peace.

LEELA: That makes me mad.

(Googah brings Leela and Sheebok back to the sitting place.)

GOOGAH: It should. And over time, these stories of revenge became warped and twisted, so there is little truth to any of the stories that are told. For hundreds of years gnomes have told their children that trolls are bad. And for hundreds of years trolls have told their children that gnomes are bad. No one questions it, and before long, everyone believes it to be true.

SHEEBOK: What can we do?

LEELA: Those things happened a long time ago. And now there's talk of a war.

GOOGAH: No one can change what happened in the past. But you can do something about the future, and you can start right now.

SHEEBOK: But we want you to tell us what we should do.

GOOGAH: The choice is yours to make, not mine. Let the truths you have just learned guide you in making wise decisions. It took a lot of courage for you to get to know one another, and what you have done has already made a difference. Someday gnomes and trolls will learn to trust each other again. Until then, I can only tell you this:

(Googah takes Leela's and Sheebok's hands and places them together in his.)

True friends will never let anything come between them.

FOGEL: *(Spreading his wings wide:)* Aw! Aw!

LEELA: Thank you, uh, Great Googah. Thank you, Fogel.

(Fogel moves his head forward and backward in agreement.)

GOOGAH: *(Confidentially:)* You can call me "Googie" if you promise not to tell anyone.

FOGEL: *(Laughing:)* Aw-aw-aw-aw-aw-aw!!

LEELA: Thanks...Googie.

SHEEBOK: Thank you, Googie. You too, Fogel.

(Sheebok and Leela cross to Fogel and begin petting him. Fogel starts clowning around.)

LEELA: You're quite a clown, aren't you?

GOOGAH: Oh, he is. He likes you both. Before I send you back, there's something I want you to have.

(Googah into one of his shelves and picks up two small cloth bags.)

I want you to keep these things a secret. Don't open them until I send you back.

(He hands a bag to Sheebok and a bag to Leela.)

Wear it around your neck. Someday, I think you may find these useful.

SHEEBOK: What are they?

GOOGAH: You'll figure it out. *(With a wink:)* Read the instructions! Now, I'm afraid it's time to say good-bye.

FOGEL: Awwwwwk!

SHEEBOK: Good-bye Fogel.

LEELA: Good-bye Fogel.

FOGEL: Aw! Aw!

(They cross to center.)

GOOGAH: Farewell, Leela and Sheebok.

SHEEBOK: Good-bye.

LEELA: Good-bye, and thanks!

GOOGAH: *(Turns from them and walks downstage, stops, closes his eyes, and raises his arms:)* Two young girls

A troll and gnome

The time has come

To send them home.

(There is a flash and a puff of smoke and they are gone.)

You'd better keep an eye on them, Fogel.

FOGEL: *(Spreading his wings:)* Aw!

(End of Scene 5.)

Want to read the entire script? Order a perusal copy today!