

A TALE FROM THE NORTH WOODS

A play for young audiences

By Lynn-Steven Johanson

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For

Aaron, Erikka, and Trevor

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

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.

She turns and disappears into the darkness as the LIGHTS FADE TO BLACK.

End of Prologue.

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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.

LEELA (CONT'D)
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.

KROOKY (CONT'D)

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)

KROOKY (CONT'D)

I'll be at the rabbit's den.
 (Still no answer)
 See ya.

LEELA

Bye.

Krooky exits.

LEELA (CONT'D)

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.

LEELA (CONT'D)

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 movement. 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.

MOOSHLOK (CONT'D)

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.

LEELA (CONT'D)

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.

KROOKY (CONT'D)

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.

LEELA (CONT'D)
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-

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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.

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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.

MOTHER TROLL (CONT'D)
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...

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.

GRODOK (CONT'D)
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.

Hi.

SHEEBOK

Say hello to the pack.

FATHER TROLL

Mooshlok and Sheebok exchange greetings with members of the pack.

Say, you're getting pretty big.

FIRST TROLL

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.

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

SECOND TROLL

You hear that?

FATHER TROLL
(Puts his arm on Mooshlok's shoulder)

Guess what I did today?

MOOSHLOK

I don't know.

FATHER TROLL

I scared my first gnomes away.

MOOSHLOK
(Beaming)

Gnomes!

FIRST TROLL

Trolls begin talking amongst themselves.

We've got gnomes in the neighborhood?

THIRD TROLL

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.

MOOSHLOK (CONT'D)

Wimp!

SHEEBOK

Owww! 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.

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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.

FATHER TROLL (CONT'D)

We have to band together on this.

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.

Thanks, Dad. MOOSHLOK

What about me? SHEEBOK

You're a girl! MOOSHLOK

So!! SHEEBOK
(Indignantly)

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

What are we having? MOOSHLOK

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

Oh, yum! MOOSHLOK

Thank you, Papa. SHEEBOK

Yeah, thanks. MOOSHLOK

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.

SHEEBOK (CONT'D)

We have to hide. Hurry!

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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.

UNCLE ILYA (CONT'D)

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!

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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.

SHEEBOK (CONT'D)

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.

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SHEEBOK

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

LEELA

I know.

SHEEBOK

What can we do?

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