

POLDI AND THE FERN SEEDS

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A Play For Young Adults

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## POLDI AND THE FERN SEEDS

### Synopsis

Poldi, a young boy, is tricked by his sisters, Ilena and Rosika, into entering the woods to find the magical fern seeds that can only be collected on Mid-Summer's Eve. They think he'll be too scared to enter, but he does to prove he's brave. The sisters, worried their parents will be mad because they've lost their little brother, enter the woods to find him. Through the machinations of the bored elf, Gonzalo, the sisters are captured by the ogre, Nathaniel. Along the way, Poldi discovers the fern seeds make him invisible to everyone but the elf. The mother and father, pregnant and an injured, respectively, are physically unable to enter the woods after their children. Poldi must seek the help of Hekabe, the witch, who sees the future and provides him with several magical implements that will aid in the finding and rescue of his sisters from the hungry and seemingly dull-witted ogre. In the end, Poldi learns that being afraid and being brave aren't exclusive of each other and it's okay to be scared while doing the right thing.

## POLDI AND THE FERN SEEDS

### Character Breakdown

POLDI – A young boy. (Can be played by teenage male who looks younger.)

ILENA – Poldi's eldest sister.

ROSIKA – Poldi's other sister, older than Poldi, younger than Ilena.

MAMA – The mother of Poldi, Ilena, & Rosika.

PAPA – The father of Poldi, Ilena, & Rosika.

GONZALO – An elf.

NATHANIEL – An ogre.

HEKABE – A witch.

Perusal Only

SCENE I

(Lights up on a blank stage. Ilena, and Rosika enter from stage left. Poldi is following.)

He's still behind us.

ILENA

Yes he is.

ROSIKA

Good.

ILENA

I thought we were tired of him following us everywhere?

ROSIKA

We are. And now we're going to teach him a little lesson.

ILENA

Then he'll stop following us around.

ROSIKA

Exactly. Poldi! Why are you here?

ILENA

I wanted to see where you were going.

POLDI

I'll tell you, little brother. We're going into the woods.

ILENA

You are?

POLDI

We are?

ROSIKA

Of course we are.

ILENA

Mama says not to go into the woods at night.

POLDI

She only says that to you.

ILENA

Why are we going into the woods?

ROSIKA

Don't you remember sister? To get the fern seeds.

ILENA

Fern seeds? Oh, yes! The fern seeds.

ROSIKA

Fern seeds?

POLDI

They can only be seen on Mid-Summer's Eve.

ILENA

The only time.

ROSIKA

Why do you want fern seeds?

POLDI

They have magical powers.

ILENA

And we'll sell them to the witch.

(Beat)

The witch!?

ROSIKA & POLDI

Yes. The witch.

ILENA

I heard she eats little kids after she cooks them in brussel sprout soup.

POLDI

And she can turn into a cat.

ROSIKA

Not if you have something she wants. Like fern seeds that we are going to get for her.

ILENA

And you can't come along because everyone knows you're scared.

ROSIKA

I'm not scared.

POLDI

You're not afraid to enter the woods at night?

ILENA

To get the fern seeds?

ROSIKA

I'm not afraid.

POLDI

Well then. Off you go.

ILENA

What?

POLDI

Brave Poldi.

ROSIKA

Out there?

POLDI

Into the woods. Yes.

ILENA

At night.

ROSIKA

But what about what Mama told us?

POLDI

She only meant that because she didn't think you were brave enough.

ILENA

Really?

POLDI

But you are brave enough. You're brave and smart.

ROSIKA

I guess. But still, Mama --

POLDI

ILENA

Don't you want to show Mama how brave you are?

ROSIKA

Every mother deserves a brave son.

POLDI

All right. I do want Mama to know I'm brave.

ROSIKA

Wonderful. You're such a good little brother.

ILENA

So you remember what you have to do?

POLDI

Find the fern seeds that can only be seen on Mid-Summer's Eve.

ILENA

That's right.

POLDI

Where will I find them?

ILENA

They're fern seeds.

POLDI

So I should look for ferns?

ROSIKA

Such a clever little boy.

ILENA

We'll wait here for you.

(Pause)

ILENA

Well Poldi?

ROSIKA

Don't just stand there.

POLDI  
I guess I'll go now. If you really want me to.

ILENA & ROSIKA  
We do.

POLDI  
(Walks to other side of stage.)  
I'm going.

ILENA  
Brave Poldi.

ROSIKA  
Are we really going to take the fern seeds to the witch?

ILENA  
Silly! Of course not. He'll never make it into the woods.

POLDI  
I can see them laughing.

ROSIKA  
That's right. He'll never make it. Is he shaking?

ILENA  
Most definitely. Soon he'll come running back, crying.

POLDI  
They don't think I'm brave enough to go into the woods.

ROSIKA  
Silly Poldi.

ILENA  
That'll teach him to follow us around.

POLDI  
They're just waiting for me to come running back to them.  
(Beat)  
I'll show them I'm brave. I'll get those fern seeds.  
(Exit Stage Right)

ROSIKA  
Ilena! Poldi went into the woods.

ILENA  
What? Oh, you just wait. He'll be right back.

ROSIKA  
Are we sure?

ILENA  
Of course we are.

ROSIKA  
That's good.

ILENA  
Once he's been in there a couple of seconds he'll come running and crying.

ROSIKA  
Oh, we'll tease him so much for this. He'll leave us alone for sure.

ILENA  
Little brothers are so gullible.

(Pause)

ROSIKA  
Shouldn't he be back out by now?

ILENA  
Any moment. Just you watch.

(Pause)

ROSIKA  
Sister, I don't mean to question your plan, but Poldi hasn't come running and screaming yet.

ILENA  
I can see that. Oh, this isn't the way it was suppose to happen. He ruins everything.

ROSIKA  
What do we do? Mama and Papa will be very upset if we lose our little brother.

ILENA  
We're not going to lose him. Come on.

ROSIKA  
Where?

After Poldi.

ILENA

You mean into the woods? At night?

ROSIKA

What would you suggest?

ILENA

Tell Papa.

ROSIKA

Papa has a broken leg. What can he do besides punish us?

ILENA

There must be something he can do.

ROSIKA

No, we have to do it.

ILENA

Ilena, Mama said to stay out of the woods at night.

ROSIKA

Well we can't stay out now. Trust Poldi to go and spoil our joke.

ILENA

If only he'd done what he was supposed to do.

ROSIKA

We have to go get him before he gets lost.

ILENA

I don't think I can ever forgive Poldi for doing this to us.

ROSIKA

We need to hurry.

ILENA

(They exit Stage Right as Gonzalo enters Stage Left.)

GONZALO

Humans.

GONZALO (Cont.)

(Beat)

Two sisters send their brother on a foolish quest on a Mid-Summer's Eve. And they dare to enter the woods on this of all nights.

GONZOLO (Cont.)

This has the potential for an entertaining evening.

(Beat)

And things have been so dull lately. Time for some excitement.

(Beat)

I must find Nathaniel. He's always ready for a little fun.

(Exits Stage Right)

SCENE II

(Poldi enters Stage Right)

POLDI

I bet my sisters aren't laughing now. I am brave enough to come into the woods at night. Mama will be pleased at how brave I am.

(Beat)

Everything looks and sounds different at night. Papa says the woods aren't meant for people at night. But this doesn't seem so bad.

(Beat)

But I still haven't found any ferns. Well, I guess I need to keep looking.

(Exits Stage Left)

(Enter Ilena and Rosika Stage Right)

ROSIKA

I don't see him anywhere.

ILENA

Poldi! Poldi come back here!

(Beat)

How could he have gotten so far into the woods?

ROSIKA

He's pretty fast. And clever.

ILENA

That's not helping us find him.

ROSIKA

Poldi! Poldi where are you!?

ILENA  
This isn't working.

ROSIKA  
What do we do?

ILENA  
We'll have to go home and tell Papa what Poldi did.

ROSIKA  
What Poldi did?

ILENA  
We tried to stop him from going into the woods, remember?

ROSIKA  
Not really.

ILENA  
But Poldi was insistent? He ran off before we could stop him?

ROSIKA  
I thought it was our....  
(Beat)  
Oh... Right... Of course. Bad Poldi!

ILENA  
Exactly. Let's go tell Papa.

ROSIKA  
Not that way.

ILENA  
What do you mean not this way? This is the way we came.

ROSIKA  
No, we came from that direction.

ILENA  
Rosika, you're lost. We came from this way. Now follow me.

ROSIKA  
I really believe that was the right way home.

(There's a loud ogre roar, Stage left.)

You may be right. Let's go your way.

ILENA

What was that?

ROSIKA

I don't know and I don't think we should find out. Hurry sister.

ILENA

What if it's Poldi and he's hurt?

ROSIKA

(Loud ogre roar)

Poldi never sounded like that.

ILENA

It's getting closer.

ROSIKA

Then we should get farther away.

ILENA

But if it's Poldi....

ROSIKA

That's not Poldi!

ILENA

(Enter Nathaniel with ax.)

It's an ogre!

ROSIKA

Run, sister!

ILENA

(Rosika and Ilena exit Stage Right. Nathaniel follows them)

(Enter Poldi, Stage Left)

POLDI

How much of the forest do I have to walk through before I -- There! Finally I've found some ferns.

POLDI (Cont.)

(Beat)

Oh. The seeds glow in the moonlight shadows. And they're so tiny.

(Beat)

I didn't bring anything to put them in. That wasn't very clever. Let me think...

POLDI (Cont.)

(Beat)

My pocket! No. They'll just fall through the bottom because of the holes.

(Beat)

Wait, I've got it. I'll make a little sack from my other pocket and put the seeds in there.

(Poldi tears off a pocket and fills it with fern seeds and ties off the pocket. Gonzalo enters Stage Left and stops to watch Poldi.)

POLDI

Perfect. Now they'll stay safely in my other pocket.

(Beat)

Ilena and Rosika will be surprised. They can't say I'm afraid anymore.

GONZALO

Hello.

POLDI

Ah!

GONZALO

I'm sorry. Did I frighten you?

POLDI

No. Well...yes. I guess you did. I didn't expect to meet anyone out here.

GONZALO

When you come into the woods on Mid-Summer's Eve you should be prepared to meet lots of folks.

POLDI

Lots of folks? I thought no one came into the woods at night?

GONZALO

You did.

POLDI

That's true. My sisters said that I had to. To show I was brave so that my mother would be proud of me.

GONZALO

They tricked you.

POLDI

That was probably why they were laughing. But I showed them.

GONZALO

Did you?

POLDI

Not only did I come into the woods, but I also found the fern seeds.

GONZALO

You found fern seeds?

POLDI

Yes, sir. They said I had to find them to prove I was brave.

GONZALO

I think that counts as brave.

POLDI

Now I have them here in my pocket, and I was just going home when you...surprised me.

GONZALO

Going home is a good idea. The woods are no place for a human this night.

POLDI

Aren't you human, too?

GONZALO

Me? Human? If you weren't such an innocent young man I might think you were trying to insult me.

POLDI

I wasn't trying to insult anyone. Honest. Aren't you human?

GONZALO

Thankfully, no. I'm an elf.

POLDI

An elf?

GONZALO

Indeed. I am called Gonzalo.

POLDI  
 My name is Poldi. Nice to meet you.

GONZALO  
 And now you want to shake hands?

POLDI  
 My father says it's a polite thing to do when you meet someone.

GONZALO  
 Very well, I will shake hands with you. Greetings.

POLDI  
 Are you the... the king of the elves?

GONZALO  
 Ha! Ha! Oh, Poldi, that is charming.

POLDI  
 What?

GONZALO  
 The king of the elves wouldn't be out here on this night by himself.

POLDI  
 He wouldn't?

GONZALO  
 He has much more important things to be doing.

POLDI  
 Oh. I didn't know that.

GONZALO  
 I believe you didn't. Anyway, Poldi, you need to take yourself home.

POLDI  
 I will.

GONZALO  
 The woods this night aren't safe for humans.  
 (Aside)  
 And I have other things to attend.

POLDI  
 Yes, sir. Good night.

Poldi. GONZALO

Sir? POLDI

Now that you have the fern seeds, what do you intend to do with them? GONZALO

My sister says that the witch might buy them from us. POLDI

The witch? You mean, Hekabe? GONZALO

Yes, sir. But I don't think even my sister is brave enough to face the witch. POLDI

You have to be brave to meet Hekabe? GONZALO

That's what people say. She's supposed to be a terrible person. POLDI

Be careful that you don't always believe what you hear, Poldi. GONZALO

Don't always believe what I hear? POLDI

People will often speak badly of things they don't understand. GONZALO

So you think the witch, uh, Hekabe, isn't as frightening as people say? POLDI

I think you should make your own judgments, and not always listen to what others say. GONZALO

All right. I'll try to remember that. POLDI

Good. GONZALO

(Beat)

Well, off you go, Poldi. Straight home.

GONZALO (Cont.)

Good night, sir.

POLDI

(Poldi exits Stage Right)

Two sisters have played a jest on their little brother. A jest gone wrong. Wrong for them. What a fun evening this is becoming.

GONZALO

(Exits Stage Left)

(Ilena and Rosika enter Stage Right)

Faster, Rosika! Faster!

ILENA

I've hurt the bottom of my foot and can hardly run. It hurts too much.

ROSIKA

The ogre is so close. We have to hurry. Get up, Rosika!

ILENA

(Loud ogre roar)

I'm up. I'm running.

ROSIKA

No. No I'm not. I can't run anymore. Leave me.

(Beat)

All right. I'll give mother and father your best regards.

ILENA

You can't leave me!

ROSIKA

You just told me to leave you.

ILENA

I didn't think you really would!

ROSIKA

Then don't say what you don't mean.

ILENA

Listen!

ROSIKA

Go ahead. I'm listening.

ILENA

No. Listen. The ogre. I don't hear him anymore.

ROSIKA

You're right. Maybe we've lost him.

ILENA

(Nathaniel enters silently Stage Right.)

Oh, I'm so glad. I was afraid he meant to eat us.

ROSIKA

It would be just like an ogre. Can you stand?

ILENA

Yes. Yes I can.

ROSIKA

Um. Ilena.

(Beat)

I won't carry you. You'll have to walk on your own.

ILENA

That's not our problem.

ROSIKA

No, it's yours. And I will leave you behind if you stop again.

ILENA

You should have left me already.

ROSIKA

We haven't even started out yet.

ILENA

Ilena, look behind you.

ROSIKA

What?

ILENA

(Beat)

Ah! Where did he come from?

ILENA (Cont.)

I sneak. You talk loud.

NATHANIEL

Haven't I told you that before?

ILENA

Now's not the time.

ROSIKA

I capture you.

NATHANIEL

What if we don't want to be captured?

ILENA

We could still run.

ROSIKA

You run. Me smash. Use ax.

NATHANIEL

That's a big ax.

ROSIKA

Good for smashing.

NATHANIEL

I'm not really in the mood to be smashed. What about you?

ILENA

I'll pass, thank you.

ROSIKA

Then me capture you.

NATHANIEL

Fine. Yes. You captured us.

ILENA

(Nathaniel binds them with rope)

You come.

NATHANIEL

Okay! Okay! Don't pull so hard.

ILENA

We're coming.

ROSIKA

How's your foot?

ILENA

I'd forgotten it. We have more serious issues now.

ROSIKA

Less talk. More walk.

NATHANIEL

Ow, not so hard, you big, smelly... ogre.

ROSIKA

Where is he taking us?

ILENA

More walk. Less talk.

NATHANIEL

(Exit Stage Left all)

SCENE III

(Enter Poldi Stage Right)

POLDI

Ilena! Rosika! I found them. I did it!

(Pause)

Ilena? Rosika? I found the fern seeds. I went into...the woods? Where are you?

(Enter Mama and Papa Stage Left. Papa is on a crutch, Mama is pregnant.)

MAMA

I thought I heard Poldi's voice, husband.

PAPA

But there's no one here. Let's go back inside.

POLDI  
Mama, Papa, I'm right here.

MAMA  
There, again. I heard his voice.

PAPA  
Is he dead? Is that his ghost we hear?

POLDI  
I'm not dead. I'm right here. See!

MAMA  
Or is it an evil sprite trying to trick us?

PAPA  
It is Mid-Summer's Eve.

MAMA  
How can they be so cruel with all our children missing!

PAPA  
Go away! We won't be fooled by your trickery!

POLDI  
Can't you see me, Mama?

MAMA  
It sounds so much like him. Poldi! Where are you?

POLDI  
Maybe the fern seeds have something to do with this? I'll need to put them somewhere safe.

PAPA  
It's just a trick of the night, wife. Let us go back. You are too pregnant and I too injured to be out on this night.

POLDI  
I'll put the seeds over here.

(Beat)

Now... Mama! Papa!

MAMA  
Poldi! You are here. We were so worried about you.

PAPA

Where were you, son? We called and called and you never answered.

POLDI

I was in the woods.

MAMA & PAPA

The woods!?

MAMA

I told you to never, ever, enter the woods at night, Poldi.

POLDI

Ilena said that was because you didn't believe I was brave enough.

PAPA

Your mother would never say such a thing.

MAMA

I already know how brave you are, Poldi. I don't need proof.

POLDI

But Ilena said --

PAPA

Ilena was playing a trick on you.

MAMA

You know they're always trying to get you into trouble.

POLDI

But they were laughing, so I showed them. I went into the woods.

PAPA

They were probably more scared than you at that moment.

POLDI

But I wasn't scared, Papa. And I found the fern seeds.

PAPA

Fern seeds? Why fern seeds?

POLDI

Ilena didn't say. They must be important because Gonzalo said --

Gonzalo? Who's Gonzalo?

MAMA

The elf I met --

POLDI

An Elf!?

MAMA & PAPA

He wasn't the king of elves. Just an ordinary elf.

POLDI

What did he want? Did he hurt you? Oh my poor little boy!

MAMA

I'm fine, Mama. He just wanted to know why I was in the woods.

POLDI

What did you tell him?

PAPA

That I went into the woods to prove I was brave. He thought it was silly.

POLDI

And dangerous.

PAPA

It didn't feel dangerous.

POLDI

It is. Terribly dangerous.

MAMA

But I'm home safe. And I have the fern seeds to show Ilena and Rosika.

POLDI

Where are they?

(Beat)

Mama! Why are you crying?

(Beat)

Your sisters are gone, Poldi.

PAPA

Where did they go?

POLDI