

Once Upon a Bridge... is an audience participation play that focuses on the use of manners and what it means to be polite. As an audience participation play, there are times when actors will need to improvise a line to cover a response from a participant which does not provide (or otherwise derails) the intended interaction. This is common and necessary. However, this does not give the actors the ability to improvise their way through the script. Improvised material should only be used as a last resort to enable the performance to move forward as intended.

The run-time of *Once Upon a Bridge...* is approximately 60 minutes.

Characters:

Troll

Little Billy Goat

Meddie M. Billy Goat

Big Billy Goat

Troll and Little Billy Goat can be played by either male or female actors. Any pronouns within the script just need to be adjusted.

Meddie M. Billy Goat is designed to be female, just as Big Billy Goat is designed to be male.

Locations:

Troll's bridge

Lights up. The small TROLL house sits upstage of the bridge which connects a lush green meadow to a more dusty, dirt-packed area of ground.

TROLL: *(entering backwards from house with a tray of cookies, turns)* Oh, dear. Oh my. Oh, my dear. I didn't see you there—please, please, please don't run away. I am so very lonely. No one ever crosses my bridge. No one ever comes to visit. No one every says “How are you doing today, Troll?” I hear them coming down the lane there and come out to meet them, but as soon as they see me—they run away. And if I run after them to find out what is wrong—they run even faster. I just don't understand. I'm a nice troll. I keep my bridge neat and clean. I make sure the grass in the meadow is cut. I bake delicious chocolate chip cookies. But no one sees the work I do and no one gets to taste my cookies. Yummmmmmm...hmmmmmmmm. Oh, I don't think I have enough for all of you—I've never actually seen so many people all at one time. It is actually making me a little nervous—you know, butterflies in my tummy. They tickle and make me feel like I have to hiccup. *(hiccups)* Oh, excuse me. *(hiccups)* Oh, goodness. Do you ever get hiccups? *(react)* You do? *(hiccups)* They are kind of annoying—don't you think? *(hiccups)* Oh, this will never do. *(hiccups)* Do you know how to make them go away? *(react)* Hold your breath? Like this? *(holds breath for a moment, relaxes, hiccups)* That didn't work very well at all. Maybe if I do it a little bit longer. Let me try. What if all of you cunt to twenty and I'll hold my breath. You can count all the way to twenty, right? *(react)* Oh good. Ready? Okay. Go!

TROLL holds breath while audience counts. (Puffed out cheeks read like holding breath, but the actor still can breath and prompt the audience to continue counting without actually having the stress of holding their breath.)

TROLL: Aaahhhh. Thank you. That is so much better. *(hiccups)* Oh, no! Well, I only know one thing to try. My grandtroll told me about an old troll wife's remedy once. See you...oh, I would feel too silly doing this all by myself. Would any of you like to come up here and try this with me? *(react)* You would?! All right. *(selects two children)* Why don't you and you come up here on the lane with me. Be careful, the lane can be a bit bumpy. So, you stand here and you here.

TROLL places the children, one on each side. During the following TROLL should demonstrate what is to be done and then encourage the children to do it as well.

TROLL: Now, if I remember right, Grandtroll would say “Stand with your feet apart.” So, let's stand with our feet apart. Okay, then you have to one hand on the top of your head. Like this. Then the other hand goes out in front like this. Good! Now we have to bend our knees. Can you bend your knees? Great! Now the last thing we have to do is hop around in a circle and say “Whoop!” Do you think you can do all of that? You can? Okay. Let's try.

TROLL and children hop around one time and stop. TROLL hiccups almost immediately.

TROLL: Nope, I still have the hiccups. Let's try it again! *(do again)* Good! Keep going! Oh, I think they are going away! Keep going!

TROLL and children hop around at least three times during, then stop.

TROLL: Okay! Okay! I think they are gone...wait...wait...wait. They are gone! My hiccups are gone! Great job! Thank you so very much. You did a fantastic job in making my hiccups go away. *(to audience)* Didn't they do a great job?

TROLL sends children back to seats, leading applause for their help.

TROLL: Well, maybe I should go and try to make some more cookies—you know, before my hiccups come back.

TROLL picks up tray of cookies and crosses bridge. TROLL exits into house. LITTLE BILLY GOAT enters, singing/rapping.

LITTLE BILLY GOAT: Boom delalaboom! Boom delalaboom! (*seeing green meadow*)
Oooooohhh...look at all that green grass over there. Man, am I hungry or what?

TROLL: (*re-entering at the noise*) Hello!

LITTLE BILLY GOAT: (*seeing TROLL*) Whoa.

TROLL: Please don't run away.

LITTLE BILLY GOAT: I'm not running anywhere. That would be too much work. Who are you anyway?

TROLL: I'm Troll.

LITTLE BILLY GOAT: Well, obviously, you are a troll, but who are you?

TROLL: Troll.

LITTLE BILLY GOAT: Wow! Not the brightest bulb in the bunch, wouldn't you say? I know you are troll, but what is your name?

TROLL: Troll...just Troll.

LITTLE BILLY GOAT: Now we are getting somewhere. Okay, Just—you know that is a pretty funny name—Just.

TROLL: No, my name is Troll. Only Troll.

LITTLE BILLY GOAT: I though you said it was Just Troll/

TROLL: Right.

LITTLE BILLY GOAT: So, what are you doing here, Just?

TROLL: My name is not Just. My name is Troll.

LITTLE BILLY GOAT: Right. Just Troll. First name Just. Last name Troll.

TROLL: No. I only have one name. And my name is Troll.

LITTLE BILLY GOAT: So, you're a troll and your name is Troll.

TROLL: Yes.

LITTLE BILLY GOAT: Wow. Your mom wasn't too creative, huh?

TROLL: Well, what is your name?

LITTLE BILLY GOAT: My name is Little Billy Goat.

TROLL: Little Billy Goat?

LITTLE BILLY GOAT: Yeah, Little Billy Goat.

TROLL: (*to audience*) And my name isn't creative enough?

LITTLE BILLY GOAT: Hey, what's wrong with my name.

TROLL: Oh, nothing.

LITTLE BILLY GOAT: That's right. There is nothing wrong with my name. Little Billy Goat.
It's who I am.

TROLL: You've got that right, all right.

LITTLE BILLY GOAT: So, what are you doing out here on this bridge?

TROLL: It's my bridge.

LITTLE BILLY GOAT: Your bridge? I didn't know bridges belonged to anyone.

TROLL: Oh, they do. Every bridge has a troll and every troll has a bridge. This is my bridge.

LITTLE BILLY GOAT: Oh, well, isn't that nice for you. But, if you'll excuse me, I need to go eat some of that nice green grass over there.

TROLL: But I don't excuse you.

LITTLE BILLY GOAT: What?

TROLL: I don't excuse you.

LITTLE BILLY GOAT: What do you mean "I don't" excuse you"?

TROLL: I mean that I don't excuse you to go across my bridge.

LITTLE BILLY GOAT: Well...why not?

TROLL: Because I can't.

LITTLE BILLY GOAT: What do you mean "I can't"?

TROLL: Can't, you see, is a contraction of the words can and not. Cannot. Can't. I cannot let you go across my bridge.

LITTLE BILLY GOAT: I mean, why can't you let me cross your bridge?

TROLL: I can't let you go across my bridge because you didn't ask me.

LITTLE BILLY GOAT: I didn't ask you. Okay. Can I go across your bridge?

TROLL: Uh, ummmm...No.

LITTLE BILLY GOAT: What do you mean "no"?

TROLL: I mean you cannot go across my bridge.

LITTLE BILLY GOAT: Why not?

TROLL: You didn't ask the right way.

LITTLE BILLY GOAT: You told me I had to ask to go across the bridge and I asked!

TROLL: But you didn't use any polite words.

LITTLE BILLY GOAT: Polite words? What are polite words?

TROLL: You don't know what polite words are? Oh, my dear. *(to audience)* She doesn't know what polite words are. Polite words are what you use when you really want something or want to do something. Do you know any polite words? *(react, be sure to include at least "please," "thank you," and "you're welcome")* Those are all great polite words.

LITTLE BILLY GOAT: Ugh. You never said that I had to use "polite words," you just said that I had to ask.

TROLL: But you should always use polite words.

LITTLE BILLY GOAT: That's just not fair! I am so hungry! I want to go across the bridge right now!

TROLL: All you have to do is ask politely.

LITTLE BILLY GOAT: All I have to do is—*(runs across the bridge)* Heehee! I'm across the bridge!

TROLL: That was not nice at all. You are not a nice little goat, Little Billy Goat.

LITTLE BILLY GOAT: Yummmmmm...this grass is so tasty. I am so glad I came across the bridge.