

# **The Blueberry Balladeer**

**by**

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Two-act play for youth theatre

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Act One

Scene One

The office of the Berry Pickers Guild. A round table that looks like a cranberry with curved benches on the sides. Sitting at the center of the table is a woman named TWILLEY THISTLE. Next to her on each side is THORTON and HERBERT THORNSBURY and LINDY LEEKS.

LINDY LEEKS

Do I have to read the minutes from last months meeting?

THORTON THORNSBURY

Let's skip it. It is so boring.

TWILLEY THISTLE

Boring? Does everyone here feel this way?

LINDY LEEKS

We all want to talk about the upcoming berry picking season, not old news.

TWILLEY THISTLE

Very well we can skip reading the minutes. I have planned our upcoming trip to Cape Cod...

THORTON THORNSBURY

We are going to Cape Cod again?

LINDY LEEKS

Why do we have to go to the same place every year!?

TWILLEY THISTLE

Because that is where the cranberries are. And we are berry pickers, so we pick berries.

THORTON THORNSBURY

I know, but why can't we pick a different berry this year?

LINDY LEEKS

Yeah, just once.

TWILLEY THISTLE

You don't like the cranberry?

LINDY LEEKS

It's not that we don't like it Twilley, we want to branch out. Try a new berry.

THORTON THORNSBURY

Picking the same berry from the soggy bogs every season gets old.

TWILLEY THISTLE

I am a bit shocked that you all feel this way.

LINDY LEEKS

We know you love the cranberry Twilley.

THORTON THORNSBURY

But if we are going to call ourselves the Berry Pickers Guild we had better pick more than just cranberries.

TWILLEY THISTLE

I can't argue with the will of the majority. Does anyone have a suggestion for which berry we should pursue?

THORTON THORNSBURY

How about the Blackberry?

TWILLEY THISTLE

Oh Thorton to many thorns and brambles.

LINDY LEEKS

Our arms would get scratched up.

THORTON THORNSBURY

At least our feet would be dry.

TWILLEY THISTLE

Not a good choice.

LINDY LEEKS

I have a suggestion.

TWILLEY THISTLE

Please inform us Lindy.

LINDY LEEKS

I think it would be great if we went picking Blueberries in Washington County.

THORTON THORNSBURY

Washington County?

LINDY LEEKS

Yes, why not stay in our home state? Blueberries are great on everything. I love blueberry pie.

TWILLEY THISTLE

Blueberries huh? I dunno.

LINDY LEEKS

We could visit the famous Giles Blueberry factory in  
Bleuboro, Maine. Meet the Duchess of Blueberries herself.

THORTON THORNSBURY

Duchess of Blueberries?

TWILLEY THISTLE

It would be interesting to meet her.

THORTON THORNSBURY

Who is she?

LINDY LEEKS

She runs the factory. She considers herself berry royalty.

THORTON THORNSBURY

Wow.

LINDY LEEKS

And the factory is the largest processor of Blueberries in  
the entire world!

THORTON THORNSBURY

I want to go there. Let's skip the bogs and go.

TWILLEY THISTLE

Now hold on a second. We have a very good relationship with  
the cranberry farmers in Cape Cod, yet we don't know any  
Blueberry farmers.

LINDY LEEKS

We can ask the Duchess to recommend a farm we could pick for.

THORTON THORNSBURY

Shall we vote?

TWILLEY THISTLE

(sad)

That would be the proper step.

A knock on the door.

LINDY LEEKS

I wonder who that could be.

TWILLEY THISTLE

Thorton could you please see who is at the door.

Thorton gets up. He opens the door and  
a girl about eighteen years old named  
DARCY PICKENS enters with a Honeybee  
named TITUS.

She is dressed in a pageant gown and crown. Across her chest it reads '*Miss Maine*'.

THORTON THORNSBURY

May we help you?

DARCY PICKENS

I am sorry to disturb you. Is this the office for the Berry Pickers Anonymous?

TWILLEY THISTLE

We are the Berry Pickers Guild, not Anonymous.

DARCY PICKENS

But the sign on your door says...

TWILLEY THISTLE

We know what it says, (to Lindy) we need to get that fixed.

THORTON THORNSBURY

We used to be Anonymous, but we are not addicts.

LINDY LEEKS

We pick berries cause we enjoy it.

TWILLEY THISTLE

And we could stop any time if we wanted too.

THORTON THORNSBURY

But why would we? Berry picking is the best.

DARCY PICKENS

I do not mean to offend. I came here because I would like to join.

TWILLEY THISTLE

You wish to join the Guild?

DARCY PICKENS

My manager thinks it will help me with my bad habit.

Darcy Picks her nose.

LINDY LEEKS

Oh that is gross.

THORTON THORNSBURY

Hey I recognize you. Your Darcy Pickens, the new Miss Maine.

TWILLEY THISTLE

Stating the obvious aren't we Thorton.

DARCY PICKENS

I am proud of my achievements, but sadly my habit almost cost me the crown.

THORTON THORNSBURY

She picked her nose live on television. I remember. I don't know how you still won.

DARCY PICKENS

Lucky for me my talent in the show was good enough to overcome my embarrassment.

THORTON THORNSBURY

It was bad. There she was a beauty queen digging for gold on live television. Ha-ha

TWILLEY THISTLE

Thorton show some professionalism.

DARCY PICKENS

Titus I thought you said these people would understand?

LINDY LEEKS

(whispering to Twilley)

Who she talking too?

TWILLEY THISTLE

Who is Titus?

DARCY PICKENS

My manager.

Titus buzzes.

THORTON THORNSBURY

I don't see anyone. Is he imaginary?

DARCY PICKENS

Don't be silly. He is right here.

Darcy points to Titus.

THORTON THORNSBURY

A bee?

DARCY PICKENS

A honeybee.

TWILLEY THISTLE

A honeybee is your manager?

Titus buzzes at Darcy.

DARCY PICKENS

Yes of course sorry. Titus has reminded me that he wants to be called my Beeauty manager.

LINDY LEEKS

Isn't that cute.

THORTON THORNSBURY

You understand what he is saying?

DARCY PICKENS

Yup.

TWILLEY THISTLE

How did you learn bee language

DARCY PICKENS

I am not sure. I always have been able to talk to Ridley since I was very little.

LINDY LEEKS

So you have been friends for a long time?

DARCY PICKENS

Ever since I could remember. I never met my parents. I grew up in foster care.

TWILLEY THISTLE

That must have been tough.

DARCY PICKENS

It wasn't easy. But Titus has always been there helping me. It was his idea for me to enter the Miss Maine beauty pageant. His plan is if I get noticed enough, maybe, just maybe my parents will find me.

LINDY LEEKS

(sobbing)

So sweet.

TWILLEY THISTLE

You have a seat dear and we will do what we can to help.

THORTON THORNSBURY

Why do you think joining our guild will help you quit you know, nose picking?

DARCY PICKENS

Titus thinks that if I am picking berries I will be to busy to pick...my...

LINDY LEEKS

Boogers?



TWILLEY THISTLE

Lindy, please.

DARCY PICKENS

If I can't break this habit I will never win Miss America.

THORTON THORNSBURY

You are going to compete for Miss America?

DARCY PICKENS

Of course. I will get national exposure. If my parents are out there they are bound to be watching.

TWILLEY THISTLE

Sounds like a good plan.

DARCY PICKENS

Thank you all for listening.

TWILLEY THISTLE

You have caught us just in time. We leave in a few days for Bleuboro, Maine.

LINDY LEEKS

To pick Blueberries.

THORTON THORNSBURY

And meet the Duchess.

DARCY PICKENS

Ridley and I would love to join you.

TWILLEY THISTLE

Perfect, we will be renting a van.

LINDY LEEKS

Bring some old jeans and worn out shirts.

THORTON THORNSBURY

I can provide you with some buckets.

TWILLEY THISTLE

We will have your nasty habit broken in no time.

Darcy stands to her feet.

DARCY PICKENS

Thank you very much. You are all to kind. Now if you will excuse me, Titus and I must go pack. We will see you in a few days.

Darcy exits.

THORTON THORNSBURY

I hope she doesn't put boogers in with the berries.

TWILLEY THISTLE

Eew, Thorton.

LINDY LEEKS

The poor dear.

The LIGHTS FADE.

Act One

Scene Two

It is evening on the Giles Blueberry farm. A stone fireplace with chimney is up stage center. The remains of a farm house is attached. A dining table down stage of the fireplace. At stage right is a tent by a row of beehives. A skinny beekeeper named OLIVER tends to the hives. Far stage left is an outhouse. FRIEDA, a tall woman with graceful girth stirs food in a pot hanging over the fireplace. A wiry bearded farmer named PETAH is pouring a bucket of water onto the few wall studs not totally consumed by a terrible fire. Frieda just stares at him and shakes her head. Petah sets the bucket down and sits in a chair at the charred table.

PETAH

Oww! This chair is still sizzling.

FRIEDA

Petah, I don't want to talk about it. You're lucky I am letting you eat with us.

Petah takes his jacket off and puts it in the chair then sits.

PETAH

I'm sorry Frieda. Must I say it more than a hundred times?

FRIEDA

I said I didn't want to talk about it. If you keep it up you can eat with Oliver.

(BEAT)

PETAH

I think the Balladeer is running late.

FRIEDA

We would know if she was running late if the clock on the mantle wasn't burnt to a crisp.

PETAH

You say you don't want to talk about it, yet you keep bringing it up.

(BEAT)

Frieda pulls out the swinging pot and pours out the contents into bowls.

FRIEDA

The Balladeer loves my stew.

Frieda sets the three bowls at their places on the table. She looks at the charred table and shakes her head in disgust.

PETAH

How come my bowl is only half full?

FRIEDA

You know why Petah. If the sofa had survived you would be sleeping on it.

PETAH

(sulking)

I hope she is not lost. Maybe she forgot how to get here.

FRIEDA

Don't be silly. We have the largest Blueberry farm in the Barrens. She wouldn't forget us. Or my stew.

PETAH

The farm has changed a little bit since last year.

FRIEDA

Petah, I said not one more word about it. (she slaps at a black fly) Winged nuisances. They are worse since losing the walls.

Frieda sits. Petah slouches in his seat. OLIVER carries a lantern towards the farm kitchen.

OLIVER

May I step inside?

FRIEDA

What inside? There is only outside now, thanks to you.

OLIVER

It was just as much Petah's fault, he wanted the candles.

PETAH

Well, you should have told me beeswax was flammable. I had no idea.

FRIEDA

You both are to blame.

(BEAT)

OLIVER

Will I be dining with the rest of the family tonight? Or should I return to my hive.

FRIEDA

You can sample the rolls for me. Make sure they are good. Don't want the Balladeer to get a bad batch.

Petah and Oliver look at each other in fear.

OLIVER

I don't really care for rolls.

PETAH

Me either Frieda. I am sure they are fine. I think I will stick to stew.

FRIEDA

Are you two implying that my rolls are not good.

OLIVER

No, not at all. Just not...

Frieda grabs a hot roll from the pan and shoves it into Oliver's mouth. Oliver is mumbling.

FRIEDA

Chew it. (BEAT) Oh Petah, I need you to fetch more water from the brook.

PETAH

Do you know how many times I have been to the brook today? It might be dry.

FRIEDA

(to Oliver)

So how are they?

OLIVER

(fighting down the last bit)

Moist. (Swallows hard) Very delicious.

Frieda notices Petah staring out into the darkness.

FRIEDA

What are you afraid?

PETAH

No, I am just...you know being cautious. It is very dark out.

FRIEDA

Take Oliver's lantern. She will be here any minute and I am sure she will be wanting a nice cool drink after her long journey.

Petah takes Oliver's lantern and leaves warily. Oliver goes to sit down in a chair. Then jumps up quickly.

OLIVER

Ouch!

FRIEDA

I do not want to talk about it.

Oliver rubs his butt from being scorched by the charred chair. He takes off his bee keeper hat and sets it down in the chair and sits on it.

FRIEDA

Do you want another roll?

OLIVER

No thank you. They are very filling.

Frieda hears bees buzzing.

FRIEDA

What's that noise? I hope you closed the door to the bee hives.

OLIVER

Of course I did. I...I think I did.

The sound of a swarm of bees erupts the night air.

FRIEDA

Oliver! I hear bees!

Frieda drops her cooking utensils and runs around the Kitchen swatting bees. Oliver puts his hat quickly back on.

OLIVER

Now you all stop this! Stop this at once! Shame on you. Go back to your hive.

FRIEDA

Ahhh! Stop them!

OLIVER

The queen is irritated. She doesn't like it when I leave them for too long. She has attachment issues.

FRIEDA

Oliver if you don't do something I am going to get angry.

OLIVER

I need some smoke to calm them down.

FRIEDA

You are not starting a fire.

OLIVER

Just remain relaxed and they will be relaxed. They only sting if they feel threatened.

Oliver swipes at the air trying to get the bees back toward the hives. Petah returns with a pail of water.

FRIEDA

Wait a second. Is that what happened to Norma?

OLIVER

What about Norma?

FRIEDA

I know it has been almost twenty years, but don't tell me you forgot my dear sister Norma, your wife.

OLIVER

I loved her. I even sent one of my bees to find her and bring her back.

FRIEDA

Well that was a poor idea. She felt threatened by them.

PETAH

No Frieda. Her dreams chased her away.

FRIEDA

I will not talk about this anymore. You are lucky we let you still live here.

OLIVER

You need me here to tend to the bees. You may not like them, but you know the blueberries would not flourish without them.

FRIEDA

Hogwash.

OLIVER

(to bees)

Bees listen to me, it is time for bed. Back to the hive.

Oliver leaves for the hives, hand signaling for the bees to follow. Oliver opens the hive lid and lets them in. He closes it and the swarming sound stops.

FRIEDA

Are they gone? Am I safe?

PETAH

Yes.

FRIEDA

A bee keeper is supposed to 'keep' bees, not let them swarm wherever they please. I could have been stung.

PETAH

But you weren't.

The BLUEBERRY BALLADEER enters coughing and sneezing. She carries a lantern towards the farm kitchen. She is wearing very earthly clothes.

BALLADEER

I am sorry I am late.

The Balladeer has a terrible coughing fit that goes on too long for comfort.

BALLADEER

(sniffling)

I am so sorry.

FRIEDA

Are you sick? She can't be sick?

Petah leads the Balladeer to a dining chair. Frieda quickly puts her apron down on the seat before she sits.

PETAH

Well, this is dreadful news. If she has a cold...

FRIEDA

She can't sing!



BALLADEER

(scratches at throat)

I just need to get better. My throat.

FRIEDA

We need hot tea. Petah, warm up that water you got in the kettle.

Oliver hears the conversation from the bee hives. He goes into his hive to get some honey.

FRIEDA

(to Balladeer)

Warm yourself up by the fire.

Petah and Frieda make the Balladeer comfortable in a rocking chair by the fire. Petah pours water into the kettle.

BALLADEER

Thank you. I (sneezes) so sorry. I have tried everything. Nothing works.

Oliver exits the hive with honey.

FRIEDA

I am an expert at curing ailments. The common cold will be no problem. We will have you singing the lullaby by morning.

BALLADEER

This is not a common cold.

Oliver returns with the honey.

OLIVER

Here is the honey for the tea.

Petah takes the honey from Oliver.  
Frieda takes a book of the mantle.

FRIEDA

Thankfully my father's home remedy book survived the fire we had this morning. (flipping through the pages) "Cures for the common cold".

BALLADEER

But it is not a common cold.

FRIEDA

Hmm, very well oh here it is..."Cures for the bitter cold."

BALLADEER

It's not a bitter cold either.

FRIEDA

Okay let's see, oh here we go "Cures for the Nasty cold."

BALLADEER

Frieda Pyle, you are not listening to me. It is not a nasty cold. (sneezes violently)

PETAH

Sounds pretty nasty to me.

BALLADEER

A Willisoggle caught this cold and gave it to me.

PETAH

Do you realize what you just said?

FRIEDA

It's her congestion. We didn't understand her properly. It sounded like you said a Willisoggle gave you this cold?

BALLADEER

That is what I said.

OLIVER

What is a Willisoggle?

Frieda covers Oliver's mouth.

FRIEDA

Don't utter its name to loud it might hear you!

PETAH

(to Balladeer)

You saw one?

BALLADEER

Yes, well not all of him, but I could smell him.

FRIEDA

Did it smell like rotten potatoes and raw onions?

BALLADEER

Oh yes and much worse.

FRIEDA

That was a Willisoggle alright.

OLIVER

But how did it give you a cold?

BALLADEER

I was given a gift that was labeled: 'To the Blueberry Balladeer, from a devoted fan.' The box reeked, but it was wrapped in pretty paper and a blue bow. I opened it and it was empty inside. Suddenly I sneezed. Then my eyes burned and my nose got stuffy.

PETAH

So you can't be sure?

BALLADEER

Then I heard the Willisoggle laugh from behind a large rock. And with a gruff voice he said, "Now we berry blights can eat, and eat all the berries we want because you cannot sing us to sleep."

FRIEDA

This is terrible. My father's book has no cure for a Willisoggle cold.

BALLADEER

No one does. This is a smart Willisoggle.

PETAH

I thought they were dumb?

BALLADEER

Not this one. This scheme was very well planned and well executed.

FRIEDA

What about the berries? If you don't sing the blights to sleep they will overrun the Blueberry farms.

BALLADEER

I have tried every remedy and medicine out there. It's been weeks and I can't get rid of it.

PETAH

You poor thing.

OLIVER

(to Frieda and Petah)

You don't really believe all this do you?

FRIEDA

I can't believe my aunt Mildred forced my dear sister to marry you. But it happened. She said "Norma dear you should find yourself a beekeeper and a dog gone good one. It's the bees that make the berries flourish."

OLIVER

(very sad)

Norma didn't like my bees.

PETAH

Don't cry Oliver. Norma left to become an entertainer on a cruise ship because that is what she wanted to do. It had nothing to do with you or the bees.

OLIVER

Well, the house burning down was my fault.

PETAH

No it wasn't. I asked you do bring some beeswax over so I could try to make a candle for Frieda.

BALLADEER

(points to the house)

It was the beeswax that started...

PETAH

Yes, I had set the jar of beeswax down and decided to light my pipe and like the Hindenburg...

FRIEDA

Poof! All my nice linens, momma's dishes, and papa's portrait. Poof!

PETAH

Poof!

OLIVER

I should have told you beeswax is very flammable.

PETAH

At least we can enjoy the summer breeze.

FRIEDA

I don't want to talk about it.

BALLADEER

Do you think we should tell the Duchess of Blueberries?

FRIEDA

And start a panic? Last person I want to know is my aunt Mildred, "The Duchess of Blueberries" sticking her nose in our business.

PETAH

She has a right to know. She is family after all.

FRIEDA

The day Aunt Mildred forced my Uncle Vernon to retire from running the Blueberry factory and dubbed herself the "Duchess of Blueberries" was the day she severed her family ties.

OLIVER

She did tried to force Norma to love me. Instead she caused her to run away.

PETAH

She does buy all of our blueberries.

FRIEDA

She needs us as much as we need her.

BALLADEER

Maybe we should wait and see if I get better.

PETAH

The blueberries have already blossomed. They are vulnerable. A Willisoggle is just one berry blight to be worried about.

OLIVER

A Willisoggle sounds horrible. What could be worse than that?

PETAH

The green worms.

FRIEDA

Ew! No not them. Petah we need to do something and quick.

PETAH

We must tell someone. If not the Duchess, the other farmers.

FRIEDA

I don't want word getting out that the blueberry crop could be in jeopardy. It is our livelihood. People might switch to a different fruit.

OLIVER

Like cranberries?

PETAH

That is nonsense. Who would want to put cranberries on their pancakes?

Frieda reaches for a journal sitting on the mantle. She opens it.

FRIEDA

Perhaps daddy Wyman's journal will offer some insight on how to defeat a Willisoggle.

Frieda starts flipping through the journal pages.

BALLADEER

Was your father an expert on Willisoggles?

FRIEDA

Well, my father and Uncle Vernon did fight one many years ago.

BALLADEER

How did they defeat it?

FRIEDA

He would never tell me. No matter how many times I pleaded. He said it was too scary. I am hoping he wrote it down. Wait, here it is, "August 11th 1956, My brother Vernon and I discovered the secret to stopping the Willisoggle, you need too...

PETAH

Go on tell us the rest.

FRIEDA

It is hard to make out. The pages are burned.

BALLADEER

(coughing)

Burned?

Frieda sets the journal down and Petah picks it up.

PETAH

Let me see if I can read that. "The secret to stopping the Willisoggle is...Hungarian Gnomes?"

FRIEDA

Give me that. It says Bavarian Gnomes.

PETAH

Don't really matter Hungarian or Bavarian. We need Gnomes.

FRIEDA

That makes no sense.

BALLADEER

Maybe they are trained in fighting them?

FRIEDA

The rest of the pages are burned so we may never know.

OLIVER

How bout we look up in the yellow pages for some Gnomes?

Frieda looks on her book shelf. She finds a very scorched phone book.

FRIEDA

More like the charred pages. I am fortunate to have the bindings to any of these family heirlooms. (BEAT) Let's see...Ah-ha, Mythical creature fighting gnomes of Bavaria. Their phone number is...242...

PETAH

Frieda?

FRIEDA

454...

PETAH

Frieda!

FRIEDA

Are you dialing these numbers?

PETAH

We have no phone.

FRIEDA

Another casualty.

PETAH

I can go into town and make the call.

Oliver sees someone in the distance walking up towards the farm house.

OLIVER

Frieda, someone is coming towards the house.

FRIEDA

You mean the remains of the house.

OLIVER

I can't be sure, but it looks like Russell Nellywort.

Frieda drops the phone book.

FRIEDA

The Duchess's royal tattletale? If he finds out that the Balladeer is ill and can't sing the lullaby....

PETAH

It won't be long before the whole county knows. We have to hide her.

BALLADEER

Just hide me in the guest room until he leaves.

FRIEDA

If only we still had rooms.

OLIVER

We could hide her in the chimney?

FRIEDA

Are you trying to torch her too?

PETAH

The outhouse.

BALLADEER

The outhouse?

OLIVER

Not sure that is the best place for her to hide. The roll...

PETAH

We are out of options. They will never look there. I am sorry my dear. Hurry!

Petah rushes the Balladeer over to the outhouse. LIGHTS FADE



Act One

Scene Three

The Giles Farm. RUSSELL NELLYWORT  
marches up to the front door. He is the  
Duchess Royal Talebearer.

RUSSELL NELLYWORT

(yelling)

Hello there? Anyone home?

FRIEDA

We are too busy to accept company Nellywort.

RUSSELL NELLYWORT

I would ask to come in but there doesn't seem to be an  
entrance.

PETAH

We had a bit of an accident this morning.

FRIEDA

An accident? An accident is wetting your pants or hitting  
your thumb with a hammer.

RUSSELL NELLYWORT

What happened in here?

PETAH

She doesn't want to talk about it.

FRIEDA

No I don't.

RUSSELL NELLYWORT

I have come to check on the status of your dinner with the  
Blueberry Balladeer.

FRIEDA

Don't trouble yourself. That's really our business.

RUSSELL NELLYWORT

So she has not come yet?

FRIEDA

Who?

RUSSELL NELLYWORT

You know who. The Blueberry Balladeer.

FRIEDA

Not yet.

RUSSELL NELLYWORT

She hasn't? Do you think something has happened to her?

PETAH

Now why would you think that?

Russell pulls out notes from his front pocket.

RUSSELL NELLYWORT

Well, every year she has dinner at your farm first. Then she has dinner at the Sowers farm the following night and so on and so forth until all the Blueberries have been sung over.

PETAH

Maybe she changed things up this year?

RUSSELL NELLYWORT

If there are changes I need to know so the Duchess can be properly informed.

FRIEDA

Don't fret Nellywort. She will be here tonight. She just hasn't arrived yet.

Russell looks around the burned down farm house.

RUSSELL NELLYWORT

I feel like you are not being honest with me.

PETAH

Since when did this turn into an interrogation?

RUSSELL NELLYWORT

Can you imagine if the Balladeer didn't sing the blights to sleep? Oh my...the twig blights would devour the berry branches, the little green worms would eat the blossoms. What would the farmers do with no Blueberries?!

OLIVER

Oh the blossoms will bear fruit without her singing to them.

RUSSELL NELLYWORT

How do you know? The Balladeer has sung to the blueberry fields for as long as anyone in the county can remember.

OLIVER

I am not sure I believe it.

FRIEDA

(shocked at Oliver)

What do you mean you don't believe it?

OLIVER

They are only a myth.

FRIEDA

Not a myth. Papa always said, "Frieda if the Blueberries are not serenaded by the soft voice of the Blueberry Balladeer by May's end, there will be no crop when autumn comes round the bend."

RUSSELL NELLYWORT

The rhymes are true.

FRIEDA

They are more than just a nuisance. Just one of them could devour our fields in a week.

PETAH

Let's not be overly dramatic.

Frieda stares at Petah.

RUSSELL NELLYWORT

I hope that if something had happened to the Balladeer that the farmers would inform me immediately. The success of the Duchesses factory depends on it.

FRIEDA

The Duchesses factory huh?

PETAH

Frieda mind your manners.

RUSSELL NELLYWORT

I guess since you are not going to offer me any food and your home is less than hospitable I shall be on my way.

FRIEDA

About time you got the hint. Have a good evening.

RUSSELL NELLYWORT

Could I use your bathroom before I leave?

PETAH AND FRIEDA

No!

RUSSELL NELLYWORT

But I don't think I can make it back to the factory.

PETAH

Oliver was in there earlier.

FRIEDA

And trust us you don't want to go in there after him.

OLIVER

Hey!

RUSSELL NELLYWORT

Very well. Good night.

PETAH AND FRIEDA

Good night Nellywort.

Russell exits.

PETAH

If he had found out that the Balladeer was sick...

FRIEDA

The whole county would have been in chaos.

OLIVER

Oh no! The Balladeer is still in the out house!

PETAH

Quick!

Petah runs through a wall that is now gone. Russell sneaks up behind the hives.

FRIEDA

Petah, please use the door.

PETAH

But Frieda there are no walls.

FRIEDA

You can at least respect their memory.

Petah backs up and goes through the door frame. He runs down to the outhouse and opens it. Russell sees The Balladeer passed out in the outhouse.

PETAH

Oh no! She has passed out.

FRIEDA

Oliver quick go help him bring her up here while I get this stew and tea ready. We have to get her back to health. If we don't we will lose the crop.

The tea kettle whistles as the LIGHTS FADE.

Act One

Scene Four

The council room of Giles Blueberry Factory. Upstage center are large industrial windows. A set of double doors are far SL. AT RISE the DUCHESS OF BLUEBERRIES is sitting in here throne chair. She is dressed in a regal blue gown befitting royalty. She rules the family factory like her personal kingdom. To her left is her treasurer TINA. Standing in front of the throne is WARREN OLDERSHAW her factory foreman.

WARREN OLDERSHAW

The good news is the factory has passed it's annual inspection.

DUCHESS OF BLUEBERRIES

The bad?

WARREN OLDERSHAW

One of the freezers is broke.

TINA

Oh dear how will we freeze the berries and prolong their freshness? It's how we stay in business year round.

WARREN OLDERSHAW

We will get it fixed before the new crop arrives. We just need some money.

TINA

That's all you ever want is money to fix this, buy that.

DUCHESS OF BLUEBERRIES

It's alright Tina. Do not worry Warren. Tina will see to it you get the funds you need.

WARREN OLDERSHAW

Thank you.

Tina growls. PHILBERT THE HERALD enters.

PHILBERT THE HERALD

Duchess of the round berry, I present the royal talebearer, Russell Nellywort. He says it is urgent.

DUCHESS OF BLUEBERRIES

(annoyed)

Allow him audience.

The Herald bows and opens the door.  
Russell Nellywort enters.

RUSSELL NELLYWORT

There is trouble in the barrens. Dire news.

DUCHESS OF BLUEBERRIES

What is the problem Russell?

RUSSELL NELLYWORT

I have found out that the Blueberry Balladeer has caught a cold. She cannot sing her lullaby!

WARREN OLDERSHAW

The Balladeer? Who is that?

RUSSELL NELLYWORT

You must be joking. She sings the blights to sleep so they won't eat the berries.

TINA

I thought she was a tall tale told by berry farmers to their children at bedtime.

DUCHESS OF BLUEBERRIES

Are you positive this information is accurate Russell?

RUSSELL NELLYWORT

Yes Mildred.

THE HERALD

You shall address her as the Duchess of Blueberries.

RUSSELL NELLYWORT

But I was friends with her brother, when she was only this high off the ground.

DUCHESS OF BLUEBERRIES

My position in this factory awards me a proper title. Do not address me as Mildred again.

RUSSELL NELLYWORT

I apologize. But I am not making this story up. The Balladeer has caught a cold from a Willisoggle and it is on the loose!

DUCHESS OF BLUEBERRIES

How do you know this?

RUSSELL NELLYWORT

I overheard a conversation at your niece's farm.

DUCHESS OF BLUEBERRIES

You were eavesdropping on my kin?

RUSSELL NELLYWORT

No, no. You can't really call it eavesdropping. They don't have eaves.

TINA

What do you mean they don't have eaves?

RUSSELL NELLYWORT

Well not anymore. Does it really matter how I found out?

WARREN OLDERSHAW

Who cares if she has a cold and can't sing some silly lullaby. It is nothing more than a tradition.

RUSSELL NELLYWORT

If the farmers believe that the crop will fail without the Balladeer's song, it could have negative effects.

WARREN OLDERSHAW

Nonsense.

DUCHESS OF BLUEBERRIES

What do you think I should do Russell?

RUSSELL NELLYWORT

You pay me to keep you informed. Not solve problems.

DUCHESS OF BLUEBERRIES

But if you were in charge what would you do?

RUSSELL NELLYWORT

Send a champion to hunt down the Willisoggle.

WARREN OLDERSHAW

A champion? Who around here has fought a Willisoggle?

TINA

Hard to do when they don't exist.

RUSSELL NELLYWORT

The Duchess knows of one. Send for your brother. He can track it down and kill it before it's too late.

The Duchess ponders.

DUCHESS OF BLUEBERRIES

Philbert.

PHILBERT THE HERALD

Yes, your highness.

DUCHESS OF BLUEBERRIES

Please send our fastest messenger to fetch my brother from Fruity Nobles retirement home.

TINA

You are sending for your brother? After all these years?

DUCHESS OF BLUEBERRIES

A good leader tries to satisfy the needs of her people. Russell, please return to the barrens and keep an ear open.

RUSSELL NELLYWORT

It's what you pay me to do your highness.

Philbert escorts Russell out the door.  
The Herald reenters.

PHILBERT THE HERALD

Duchess of the round blue berry?

DUCHESS OF BLUEBERRIES

(even more annoyed)

Yes Philbert?

PHILBERT THE HERALD

Members of the Berry Pickers Anonymous...

Twilley pokes her head through the door.

TWILLEY

Guild. Berry Pickers Guild.

Philbert tries to push Twilley back through the door.

PHILBERT THE HERALD

(clears throat)

Pardon me. May I present the Berry Pickers Guild, formally anonymous.

DUCHESS OF BLUEBERRIES

What do they want?

PHILBERT THE HERALD

They wish to speak with you.

Lindy pokes her head in. Philbert tries to push Lindy's head back.



LINDY LEEKS

We have traveled far to meet your berry majesty.

DUCHESS OF BLUEBERRIES

How many of them are there?

Philbert pokes his head out the door  
then back in.

PHILBERT THE HERALD

Five of them.

DUCHESS OF BLUEBERRIES

Very well, send them in.

TINA

Duchess you do not have time to be meeting with fans.

Philbert opens the door and Lindy,  
Twilley, Thorton, Herbert, Darcy, and  
Titus enter.

TWILLEY

Thank you so much for having a discussion with us. I am  
Twilley Thistle, the chairman of the Berry Pickers Guild.

LINDY LEEKS

And I am Lindy Leeks, member for over ten years.

THORTON THORNSBURY

I am Thorton Thornsbery. This is my brother Herbert.

HERBERT THORNSBURY

Pleasure to meet you.

Darcy starts to pick her nose, but  
Lindy pulls her hand away.

LINDY LEEKS

And this is our newest member, Darcy Pickens.

TWILLEY

She is the new Miss Maine.

DUCHESS OF BLUEBERRIES

Miss Maine huh? Congratulations on your accomplishment.

DARCY PICKENS

Thank you Duchess.

THORTON THORNSBURY

She also suffers from picking her...

TWILLEY

Thorton!

HERBERT THORNSBURY

He meant, she can pick berries.

DUCHESS OF BLUEBERRIES

I was told there were five of you, however I see only four?

The Duchess looks over at Philbert.

PHILBERT THE HERALD

They told me there was five in their party.

TWILLEY

Darcy has a pet honeybee.

LINDY LEEKS

Named Titus. He is very smart.

WARREN OLDERSHAW

A honeybee?

Titus buzzes to signal his attendance.

DARCY PICKENS

Titus is not my pet, he is my manager and friend.

TINA

Your manager?

THORTON THORNSBURY

Her Beauty manager.

Titus buzzes around the room.

DARCY PICKENS

Titus would like to say he is honored to meet your acquaintance Duchess.

DUCHESS OF BLUEBERRIES

He said that?

WARREN OLDERSHAW

You understand what the bee says?

DARCY PICKENS

Yes. I speak the language. He likes your dress.

DUCHESS OF BLUEBERRIES

Why thank you. It seems you are quite the gifted girl Darcy Pickens. What is it the Guild wants? I am sure you didn't travel all this way just to compliment my dress.

TWILLEY

The truth is we love picking berries. Berry Pickers line up.

The Berry Pickers all line up.

LINDY LEEKS

Recite!

ALL BERRY PICKERS MEMBERS

If it is a berry and it can be plucked and thrown into an old tin can, we want the honor.

ALL BERRY PICKERS MEMBERS

We will pick till our buckets overflow. We will use our hats and boots when our buckets are full.

ALL BERRY PICKERS MEMBERS

We will pick till our fingers bleed. Thorns do not stop us.

ALL BERRY PICKERS MEMBERS

We will pick till the sun goes down. Heat, rain, snow, weather does not effect us.

ALL BERRY PICKERS MEMBERS

We love to pick berries!

WARREN OLDERSHAW

They are crazy.

DUCHESS OF BLUEBERRIES

Some could call it crazy, others devotion.

TWILLEY

We would love to pick Blueberries this year from a farm in your beautiful county.

LINDY LEEKS

Maybe you could suggest a farm that could use our skilled labor?

TINA

You would work for free?

TWILLEY

We do not pick berries for money.

LINDY LEEKS

We do it because we love too.

THORTON THORNSBURY

Although the occasional berry pie is gladly accepted.

DUCHESS OF BLUEBERRIES

I can grant your request.

ALL THE BERRY PICKERS

Yay!

DUCHESS OF BLUEBERRIES

I will send you to my niece's farm in Meddybucket. It is the largest farm in all the county. They always can use help.

TWILLEY

Thank you so much!

Philbert the Herald enters from the main doors.

PHILBERT THE HERALD

Duchess of the round Blueberry?

DUCHESS OF BLUEBERRIES

Yes?

PHILBERT THE HERALD

Your brother has arrived.

DUCHESS OF BLUEBERRIES

Thank you. Send him in. Please excuse me I must meet with my brother privately. Philbert will give you directions to the Giles farm.

TWILLEY

We thank you again.

The Berry Guild bows and exits with Philbert. Vernon Giles an elderly man enters with a walker.

DUCHESS OF BLUEBERRIES

Hello Vernon.

VERNON

So you finally decided to let you're big brother out of the dungeon?

DUCHESS OF BLUEBERRIES

Vernon you weren't in a dungeon. You were in a retirement home.

VERNON

Might as well be.

DUCHESS OF BLUEBERRIES

It was for your own health that you were sent to the retirement home at Fruity Nobles.

VERNON

Own health? If playing scrabble and Yahtzee all day long is healthy I would rather be sick.

DUCHESS OF BLUEBERRIES

We have received word that a Willisoggle is in Washington county.

VERNON

(get serious)

What? Are you sure?

WARREN OLDERSHAW

It could be just a rumor.

VERNON

So were the first two world wars. (BEAT) How many? And where?

DUCHESS OF BLUEBERRIES

We have only heard of one. It supposedly gave the Balladeer a cold.

VERNON

Before or after she sung her sleeping ballad?

DUCHESS OF BLUEBERRIES

Before.

VERNON

Before!

TINA

Please be calm.

VERNON

Calm? A Willisoggle is on the loose, it gave the Blueberry Balladeer a cold, and now the crop could be threatened and you want us to remain calm?! If I don't have fresh blueberries on my pancakes this fall there will be an issue. Mildred, my dear sister I need my hunting gear.

DUCHESS OF BLUEBERRIES

I will have it pulled from storage.

VERNON

This is why you sprung me from prison? To stop the Willisoggle?

DUCHESS OF BLUEBERRIES

You were not in prison.

VERNON

They wouldn't let me leave. I guess I would call that prison. But that is in the past. I must focus on stopping the Willisoggle. I will need Loafer.

DUCHESS OF BLUEBERRIES

No, you are not taking the dog through the fields with you. I just had him groomed.

VERNON

First you take my dog, then you put me in jail and force me to eat generic jello.

DUCHESS OF BLUEBERRIES

Loafer is the family dog.

VERNON

I can't do it alone. I have to pee too often.

WARREN OLDERSHAW

Duchess we must move quickly.

DUCHESS OF BLUEBERRIES

Fine, you can take Loafer. But do not let him roll in anything, you know, disgusting.

VERNON

Whahoo! It time for an adventure.

Vernon exits with some giddyup in his step.

TINA

I can't believe you are sending you're seventy year old brother out into the barrens. He uses a walker!

DUCHESS OF BLUEBERRIES

What other choice do we have? Vernon is the only one with any experience fighting a Willisoggle.

TINA

It feels wrong sending a senior citizen to handle such a task.

DUCHESS OF BLUEBERRIES

My brother is a lot stronger than you think Tina. He lives for such adventures.

WARREN OLDERSHAW

Then we had better hope your brother took his meds.

LIGHTS FADE

END OF SCENE FOUR

Act One

Scene Five

The Blueberry Barrens. Petah and two Gnomes named Larry and Orford walk on stage they are in chain mail and funny helmets. They lean against a group of large boulders. Orford is holding is smart phone and using it as a tracking device.

ORFORD

According to my mythical creature tracking app the Willisoggle is close, very close.

PETAH

You have a tracking device on your phone?

LARRY

It's Orford's smart phone. He has an app for everything on that.

PETAH

You boys ever seen one?

LARRY

In pictures.

PETAH

But not in person?

LARRY

Nope. Have you Orford?

ORFORD

I thought I did once. Turned out to be a tree.

PETAH

I will be honest. I am a bit nervous.

LARRY

About the Willisoggle?

PETAH

Yeah.

LARRY

I am too.



ORFORD

You guys might be nervous, but I am terrified! My guidance counselor said I should be a gnome that fights mythical creatures. I think those aptitude tests are misleading. I just don't think I have the stomach for it.

LARRY

Would you rather be a lawn ornament?

ORFORD

No, I would rather work in the travel industry.

LARRY

Oh yeah. Like the Gnome with the red hat.

PETAH

I love that guy.

ORFORD

He is rich and famous. But, here I am clenching a spiked club I almost poked my eye with, about to hunt down a ferocious creature who wants to eat the world's blueberry population.

A roar is heard coming from the cave.

LARRY

Did you hear that?

ORFORD

Yes, yes I did.

PETAH

It came from that cave over there.

LARRY

Orford does your tracker say the Willisoggle is in there?

ORFORD

I am afraid so.

PETAH

Well, boys it is time to put fears aside. If we don't come back with a Willisoggle that's dead or alive, Frieda will be mad. Trust me we don't want that.

LARRY

Arm yourselves men.

The three men pick up their various weapons. All of them look like kids toys.

ORFORD

My stomach is acting very funny.

The three of them get to the cave entrance and stop.

PETAH

I think one of you should go in first.

LARRY

Why us?

PETAH

Because my wife hired you.

ORFORD

Larry, why did you take this job again?

LARRY

We haven't had a job in months. There aren't too many mythical creatures left in the world. Now go on.

ORFORD

Don't push. If I fall down in this armor I may never get up again.

Petah, Larry, and Orford enter the cave. The opening is between two large boulders. Loafer and Vernon enter. Loafer sniffs around the boulders and terrain.

LOAFER

Woof! Woof!

VERNON

Loafer is on the scent.

Loafer and Vernon exit. The LIGHTS SHIFT and the large boulders turn on stage to reveal the inside of the cave.

ORFORD

It is very dark in here.

LARRY

Close your eyes and you won't see the darkness.

ORFORD

Good idea.

PETAH

I think you phone app might be wrong. I don't know how a Willisoggle could fit through that entrance.

ORFORD

Yeah, Willisoggles are huge.

THE WILLISOGGLE

Berries?

ORFORD

I beg your pardon?

LARRY

I didn't say anything.

ORFORD

I must be hearing things.

PETAH

Caves can do that.

THE WILLISOGGLE

Berries? Do you have berries?

PETAH

Orford, the berries won't be ripe for a few more weeks. And that is if we stop the Willisoggle from eating the blossoms.

ORFORD

Who are you talking too?

LARRY

He is talking to you Orford!

ORFORD

No he is not because I did not say anything.

PETAH

You didn't say "berries"?

ORFORD

Afraid not.

Both Petah, Larry, and Orford turn to their right. Two large eyes appear piercing through the darkness.

THE WILLISOGGLE

I want berries!

ORFORD

La-La-La-Larry?

PETAH

My body has frozen from fear. Do something.

ORFORD

Go on git. Go home.

Orford throws his mace club. The club hits Petah instead of the Willisoggle. Petah falls to the ground.

LARRY

Orford you missed.

ORFORD

Oops. Don't worry the spikes aren't that sharp.

THE WILLISOGGLE

I want berries!

LARRY

I th-th-think we should be leaving.

ORFORD

Should we just leave him here?

LARRY

Every man for himself. Run!

The two Gnomes run into each other then scamper out the cave entrance. THE LIGHTS SHIFT and the boulders turn to the EXTERIOR. Larry and Orford run far stage left away from the cave.

ORFORD

(trying to catch his breath)

We are suppose to be able to fight this thing?

LARRY

(catching is breath)

At least I have caught my breath.

ORFORD

I just caught mine and wish I hadn't. Smells like boiled cabbage. You have a mint?

LARRY

I don't think it followed us. I can't do this Orford.

ORFORD

Me either. Did you see it?

LARRY

Much bigger than the pictures. And ugly.

ORFORD

And it's voice. I almost soiled my Gnome britches. I want to go home.

Vernon pops up from behind some boulders pointing his harpoon gun.

VERNON

Hold it right there elves!

LARRY AND ORFORD

Ahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!

VERNON

(to Loafer)

Would you look at what I have caught Loafer. Must be my lucky day.

Loafer runs up and sniff the Gnomes.

LOAFER

Bark, Bark.

VERNON

Don't move a muscle elves. You are going to take me to your pot of gold.

ORFORD

Pot of gold?

LARRY

He thinks we are leprechauns. (BEAT) Sir, elves make shoes, leprechauns are the ones rumored to have gold.

ORFORD

But we are neither. We are Gnomes.

VERNON

No gold?

LARRY

Sorry.

VERNON

Gnomes, like those funny lawn decorations?

ORFORD

I do not look funny.

LARRY

I am Larry, and this here is Orford.

VERNON

I am Vernon Giles. Sorry for pointing my harpoon at you. You see I am hunting a Willisoggle. So my nerves are on high alert.

ORFORD

You see that cave over there?

VERNON

Yup.

ORFORD

It's in there.

VERNON

The Willisoggle?

LARRY

Yes.

VERNON

Loafer, we are going in.

Vernon grabs his gear and slowly makes his way across stage to the stage. Loafer follows.

ORFORD

(whispering)

Larry, let's just leave right now before the old man discovers Petah.

LARRY

And go where?

ORFORD

Home. Back to Europe.

LARRY

We can't. We signed a contract with Frieda. We cannot quit till the Willisoggle is captured dead or alive.

ORFORD

Guess I should have read the fine print. Would being a lawn ornament really be that bad?

LARRY

I could never stand still that long.