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Family Plays

THE BRIDGE

Drama by
FORD AINSWORTH



THE BRIDGE

Ford Ainsworth, author of *Persephone* and other award-winning plays, has taken the old Norse folktale “Three Billy Goats Gruff” and turned it into a strong, significant drama that deals not only with truth but also with loyalty, patriotism, bravery, honesty, integrity and other qualities that make strong, independent people and strong, independent nations—qualities that seem to be disappearing from our national character. *The Bridge* not a children’s play.

From a judge at the New England Theatre Festival: “Simple, economical, tasteful. Revealed logic and thought ... gave me hope for the future of theatre. Thanks for supplying excellent plays and good service.”

“The judges loved the play, and I’m still getting compliments.” (*Malcom Ross, Richwood High School, W. Va.*)

Drama. By Ford Ainsworth. *Cast: 6 actors.* Three trolls stand guard at a bridge. Three goats beg them to let the starving herd cross the bridge to graze in lush pastures. The trolls agree on the condition that the goats sacrifice one of their members. Each goat is brave and eager to cooperate—until he is asked to be the sacrifice. The play points an accusing finger at people whose beliefs, morals and religious practices are contingent upon their own comfort and well-being. It is an important, timely, intelligent look at the weaknesses of modern society. *The Bridge* is a dynamic contest play. *Set: a bridge over a stream. Costumes: black tights and leotards with symbolic masks and accessories. Approximate running time: 35 to 40 minutes. Code: BJ8.*

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The Bridge

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A Fable in One Act

by

FORD AINSWORTH

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(THE BRIDGE)

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THE BRIDGE

Cast

These roles were designed for three women (the Trolls) and three men (the Billy Goats), but any combination of men and women may be used.

THE TROLLS

Green Troll

Gray Troll

Purple Troll

THE BILLY GOATS

Credo

Hero

Solo

Place: A bridge over a shallow stream

ABOUT THE PLAY

“Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” The problem is that we may not be able to cope with the truth if we should come to know it. Perhaps we don’t even want to know it.

Ford Ainsworth, author of “Persephone” and other award-winning plays, has taken the Old Norse Folk tale, “Three Billy Goats Gruff,” and turned it into a strong, significant drama that deals not only with truth, but with loyalty, patriotism, bravery, honesty, integrity, and other qualities that make strong, independent people and strong, independent nations—qualities which seem to be disappearing from our national character.

The play opens with three Trolls guarding a bridge. On one side of the bridge is a large herd of goats. The goats have eaten their pastures bare, and they are starving. On the other side of the bridge is a hillside lush with delicious green grass.

Three Billy Goats—Credo, Hero, and Solo—approach the bridge in hopes of persuading the Trolls to let the starving herd cross over to the green pastures. Credo and Hero cringe before the Trolls and flatter and cajole them. Solo refuses to join in the adulation, calling the Trolls fakes and superstition.

But the Trolls will open the bridge to the herd only if one of the goats volunteers to be sacrificed.

Although the script is based on a children’s story, this is not a children’s play. It is an important, timely, intelligent look at the weaknesses of modern society.

THE BRIDGE

By Ford Ainsworth

[The scene is a simple wooden bridge spanning a shallow stream. As the lights come up, three TROLLS are crouched motionless on their bridge. It is difficult to distinguish them clearly, but their goat-skull wands stand at attention above their lowered heads. A slight noise is heard in the audience. At the sound, the goat-skull wands turn toward the audience. The noise is repeated. The GREEN TROLL raises its head and stares toward the audience]

GREEN TROLL. Who's there? *[The other two TROLLS raise their heads, staring at the audience]*

GRAY TROLL. Nosy snoopers!

PURPLE TROLL. *[Advancing menacingly toward the audience]* Go away! Haven't you anything better to do than come around where you're not wanted?

GREEN TROLL. *[Moving toward audience]* The bridge is closed! Nobody is allowed to cross, so there's no use waiting around!

GRAY TROLL. *[Gesturing toward audience]* Go on! Shoo! Scat! Don't you understand plain English? Get out! Depart!

PURPLE TROLL. *[To the other Trolls]* That's the way it is nowadays. They don't even budge out of their seats. No decent respect for us honest Trolls any more!

GREEN TROLL. *[To Purple Troll]* They need to be taught a lesson or two! *[It turns to the audience]* You think you're so civilized, so refined, don't you? You scientific intellectual numskulls—

GRAY TROLL. *[Interrupting with a cackle of laughter]* That's good! Numskulls! That's what they are. Very good!

GREEN TROLL. *[To Gray Troll]* Thank you. *[Back to audience]* You intellectual numskulls delude yourselves into believing we Trolls don't exist simply because we are creatures of the imagination and can't be reduced to a formula in a test tube. Aaagh!

PURPLE TROLL. *[To Green Troll]* You're wasting your breath. They won't believe you. They only believe in scientific nonsense. *[Turning to audience]* The rubbish you swallow in your enlightened ignorance would choke a gargoyle! Can you really believe that *you* are more real than *we* are? Pooh! You're only flesh and bone! That's all you're made of!

GRAY TROLL. [*Cackling again*] Good point! Flesh and bone! And the bone is mostly in their heads! Bone-heads! [*It cackles wildly and then suddenly becomes deadly serious*] We Trolls are made of sterner stuff . . . enduring stuff! We'll out-last your crumbling bones and decaying flesh! We can destroy you, but you can never destroy us! We are beyond your silly scientific logic. We are irrational! As irrational as superstition!

PURPLE TROLL. We are invincible! As invincible as hate!

GREEN TROLL. We are intangible! As intangible as fear!

GRAY TROLL. And what are you? Sitting there smirking at your betters?

PURPLE TROLL. Billy Goats!

GREEN TROLL. That's all you are, Billy Goats!

GRAY TROLL. Stupid Billy Goats! [*Offstage, the BILLY GOATS bleat loudly with a mournful quiver at the end*] And speaking of Billy Goats, here they come!

PURPLE TROLL. [*A last word to the audience as he returns to the bridge*] If you must sit there and watch them, all right, but don't interfere!

GREEN TROLL. [*His last word to the audience as he returns to the bridge*] And there's no use telling *them* we don't exist. They know better!

GRAY TROLL. [*A final last word to the audience*] And they won't believe you anyway. [*They take their places on the bridge as the BILLY GOATS enter at Right with their heads bowed respectfully and hands clasped in supplication. Only BILLY SOLO dares to raise his head and glare at the motionless Trolls with defiant eyes*]

CREDO, HERO, & SOLO. [*Chanting in unison*]

No more grass in our pasture grows, starving, starving.

Shed a tear for our bitter woes!

Pity Billy Goats three!

[*CREDO and HERO kneel at the approach to the bridge, raising and lowering their arms in homage to the Trolls. SOLO remains erect, glaring defiantly*]

CREDO & HERO.

Hymns of praise to our Trolls we sing, praising, praising!

Homage now to our Trolls we bring! Faithful Billy Goats, we!

CREDO. Most holy powers, have mercy!

HERO. Most potent majesties, have mercy!

SOLO. [*Defiantly*] Baaaaah! [*The TROLLS swing their wands threateningly toward Solo. He is frightened, but he stands his ground*]

GRAY TROLL. [*Sarcastically*] Now that's a proper salutation from a Billy Goat, and spoken like the animal you are!

SOLO. I'm not an animal! I'm a Billy Goat!

GREEN TROLL. Why so he is!

PURPLE TROLL. A Billy Goat, indeed!

GRAY TROLL. Are you proud of that?

CREDO. Oh, no, Majesty! How could he be?

HERO. Forgive him, Excellency! Hunger has affected his mind. He can't help it.

GREEN TROLL. Hunger may have affected his mind, but it doesn't seem to have affected his knees! [*HERO and CREDO drag Solo to his knees and push his head to the ground. He bleats savagely as they press him down*] There! That's better!

HERO. He means no disrespect, Excellency!

CREDO. It's hard to maintain faith on an empty stomach, Excellency. Once he's full of grass, he'll be humility itself.

GRAY TROLL. We shall see. Before we consider your plea for mercy, suppose you identify yourselves properly.

HERO & CREDO. We are Billy Goats, Majesty!

PURPLE TROLL. That's obvious. But even Billy Goats have some individual identities . . . personal names and private convictions . . . of a sort.

HERO & CREDO. Yes, Excellency!

GREEN TROLL. Then state your names, and as briefly as possible, whatever it is you believe in.

CREDO. [*Rising*] I am Billy Credo, Majesty, and I believe in the sanctity of Trolls and unflinching devotion to those ethical practices which are the moral strength of the herd! Baaah! [*He drops to his knees and resumes his hold on Solo*]

HERO. [*Rising*] I am Billy Hero, Excellency, and I believe in the sanctity of Trolls and allegiance to those high ideals and social duties which are inspired by the supreme source of loyalty . . . herd instinct! Baaah! [*He drops to his knees and shoves Solo down hard to keep him from pulling free of Credo's grasp*]

GRAY TROLL. [*To Solo*] And what about you?

SOLO. [*Defiantly*] Baaaaah!

CREDO. [*Quickly*] He's poor Billy Solo, Majesty, but he's so hungry he doesn't believe in anything.

GRAY TROLL. So? We'll give him cause to believe in us presently. And you are all hungry, are you?

HERO. Starving, Excellency! Look at that hillside! Not a sprig of grass, not a leaf, nothing grows there but rocks. And they get bigger and sharper every day!

CREDO. We can't endure it any longer, Majesty. We must cross the bridge or die. [*He points across the bridge to the valley below*] Look there! The valley is knee deep in grass.

GREEN TROLL. Why so it is!

PURPLE TROLL. It hasn't been gobbled up and trampled down by a herd of gluttonous Billy Goats!

HERO. [*Defensively*] The herd must eat to live, Excellency. We must cross the bridge. There is no other alternative.

PURPLE TROLL. No alternative? There's another side to that hill, you know. Up over the rocks and down to the valley on the other side. They say the grass grows shoulder high there.

HERO. Don't be cruel, Excellency. We dare not even look over the hill. The sight of that tall green grass is more than our hunger can bear.

GREEN TROLL. Then what's stopping you?

CREDO. You are teasing us, Excellency. We know that monsters unspeakable lurk among those juicy stems.

HERO. Their breath stirs the grass in ripples, nodding, inviting, tempting. That way lies destruction of the herd. Have mercy!

GRAY TROLL. Mercy! What you want is charity, that costs you nothing and leaves us with a bridge worn out by your herd of hoofs. Go away!

PURPLE TROLL. Why don't you wade the river? [*Suddenly it leans down and flicks water at them with its wand. They cower away, terrified*] It's only ankle deep!

CREDO. Oh, no, Majesty! Starvation is better than that! Have you forgotten Uncle Billy Ego? He tried that! We saw what one touch, one taste of that water can do to a Billy Goat!

GREEN TROLL. Oh, yes! Billy Ego! I remember. He waded right in, didn't he?

HERO. [*Shuddering*] We tried to warn him, but . . .

CREDO. Don't talk about it! I still hear him bleating in my nightmares!

HERO. We sealed him in tight. Rolled a big rock over the mouth of the cave, and packed it in tight with mud and gravel.

CREDO. *[Covering his ears]* But I can still hear him.

SOLO. *[Struggling to rise]* Baaaahh!

HERO. We'd better stuff something in his mouth!

GRAY TROLL. Never mind. Let him up.

CREDO. But he's mad with hunger, Majesty! We can't be responsible for—

GRAY TROLL. No one expects you to be responsible. You're only Billy Goats, after all. Let him up.

HERO. Yes, Excellency. *[They release SOLO, who trots to corner Up Right and glares at them]*

SOLO. Baaahh!

GREEN TROLL. So you wish to cross our bridge, do you?

HERO. We must, Excellency. We humbly request your permission.

GREEN TROLL. Permission! It's not a question of permission.

PURPLE TROLL. It's a question of price. You may only cross this bridge at a price.

GRAY TROLL. We have to eat, too, you know, and we can't exist on grass, like a Billy Goat!

CREDO. *[Timidly]* We realize that, Majesty, but—

PURPLE TROLL. No "if's" or "but's"! If you are willing to pay the price, you can cross our bridge. If not, you can starve.

CREDO. But the price . . .

GRAY TROLL. *[Harshly]* The price is reasonable. Dirt cheap in fact. *[It moves toward them menacingly, extending its goat-skull wand]* One mangy, worthless Billy Goat—hoof, hide, horns, and all! *[They cower away]*

SOLO. Baaahhh!

CREDO. Stop that infernal bleating! If you have anything to say, say it!

SOLO. *[Advancing to them]* I have plenty to say, if you will come to your senses and listen! What do you think you'll gain by snivelling and grovelling before those ill-conceived, misshapen, moth-eaten monsters? Must you thrust yourselves like sacrificial sheep down their glutinous gullets? You can't save yourselves by gaining their favor. They have no favor to gain. Stand up and be Billy Goats! *[He draws himself up with dignity]*

HERO. *[To Trolls]* You see, Excellencies? He's mad!

SOLO. Mad! You know their price! Hoof, hide, horns, and all! Are you willing to pay it?

HERO. [*Rising dramatically*] One of us must! The whole Billy Goat herd is threatened with extinction. [*He becomes oratorically eloquent*] We must cast out all thought of self! The herd divided against itself cannot eat! The time has come when we must ask not what the herd can do for us; ask rather what we can do for the herd. A sacrifice is demanded of us, a glorious sacrifice. Let not history record that a Billy Goat was weighed on the scales of duty and found wanting! Let your watch-word be, "The greatest good for the greatest number!" United, we eat! Divided, we starve! Baaaah! [*The TROLLS break into applause, pounding the butt-end of their wands on the wooden bridge*]

TROLLS. Bravo! Bravo!

GREEN TROLL. There speaks a true-blue Billy Goat! [*HERO drops on one knee, acknowledging the applause*] What was your name again?

HERO. [*Proudly*] Billy Hero, Excellency!

GRAY TROLL. Well said, Billy Hero. Bravo! Bravo!

SOLO. [*Thrusting forward angrily*] Shut up, you bilious old horror! You nauseous old stench in the nose! You—

CREDO. [*Clutching him, trying to drag him back*] Hush! Hush! That's blasphemy! Blasphemy!

SOLO. [*Shaking free*] I will not hush! I never heard such nonsense in my life. And you call *me* mad! If sanity demands that I humbly stick my head in their ugly mouths, you're right. I *am* mad! Are you seriously suggesting that one of us should serve as a sacrificial meal-ticket for the other two?

HERO. No! We are accepting the fact that one of us must make a glorious sacrifice for the preservation of the herd!

SOLO. Glorious tommy-rot! Suppose *you* are chosen to be the sacrifice! Suppose it's *your* hoof, hide, horns, and all?

HERO. [*Nobly*] If the choice should fall on me, I shall perform my duty with honor and dignity. I only regret that I have but one hide to give for my herd!

SOLO. [*Disgusted*] I'll just bet you do! [*He turns to Credo*] And I suppose you agree to his nonsense, too?

GRAY TROLL. Naturally he agrees! His name is Billy Credo, isn't it?

SOLO. [*To Troll*] Let him speak for himself!

GRAY TROLL. Oh, by all means! [*To Credo*] Speak!

CREDO. [*Lamely*] What more can I say?

SOLO. For once try expressing an honest opinion of your own!

CREDO. [*Earnestly*] But we can have no opinions, no thoughts of

our own! *[He approaches Solo, pleading in his best clerical style]* Do you presume to set your puny reason against the wisdom of the ages? *[He indicates the Trolls]* What wisdom can be found in a mere Billy Goat except humble acceptance of his finite limitations? Our only hope lies not in pursuing eternal verities which are beyond our powers of conception and understanding, but in humble recognition of the eternal mystery of the infinite. *[He indicates Trolls and kneels submissively at the foot of the bridge]*

SOLO. *[Violently]* And you honestly believe that these snag-toothed, mildewed monstrosities perched like humpty-dumpty vultures on their rickety bridge are an expression of the infinite mystery?

CREDO. Blasphemy! Blasphemy! I won't listen to it! *[To Hero]* Cover your ears! Cover your ears! *[They retreat Down Right and drop to their knees, bowing their heads and covering their ears]*

GRAY TROLL. *[Cackling]* Your revolution isn't going too well, is it?

GREEN TROLL. You'll never change their minds!

PURPLE TROLL. They're proper Billy Goats.

SOLO. *[Advancing to bridge]* And you are proper Trolls! A pack of vicious, malicious frauds, pieced-out, patched-up monsters of delusion! You are no more an infinite mystery than I am!

PURPLE TROLL. True!

GREEN TROLL. That's very true!

GRAY TROLL. But we will eat you all the same! We may not be possessed of the infinite mystery, but we are possessed of the infinite appetite! *[The TROLLS cackle loudly at this idea]*

SOLO. *[Crossing to Hero and Credo and shouting at them]* Did you hear that? The Trolls are frauds! They're not infinite! They admitted it! *[HERO and CREDO do not respond]*

PURPLE TROLL. It's no use. They can't hear you.

GREEN TROLL. And even if they could, they wouldn't believe you!

GRAY TROLL. Give it up!

SOLO. *[Advancing toward them]* No! You're not infinite! Maybe you're not invincible, either! *[The TROLLS retreat to the far end of bridge, huddled together, their wands protruding protectively toward Solo]* Maybe we can topple you off your bridge and see what that water will do to you!

PURPLE TROLL. You might, if you all tried together, but there's not much chance of that, is there?

SOLO. *[Mounting the bridge]* Maybe I could do it all by myself!

GRAY TROLL. *[To the other Trolls]* Maybe he could!

GREEN TROLL. *[Replying to Gray Troll]* Maybe, if the others would let him, but they won't!

GRAY TROLL. *[To Solo]* Enough of your insolence! *[He strikes the bridge with the butt of his wand and thrusts the goat-skull almost in Solo's face. SOLO freezes, terrified, staring at the skull]* Credo! Hero!

CREDO & HERO. *[Starting violently]* Yes, Majesty?

GRAY TROLL. Your lunatic comrade threatened us with physical violence. Remove him! *[CREDO and HERO rush to bridge and drag Solo back down the steps. He seems dazed and moves listlessly Down Right, shaking his head to clear it]* There's not much hope for him, I think!

CREDO. Oh, don't say that, Majesty! It's the effect of hunger! Once he's full of grass, he'll be as fine a Billy Goat as you could hope to see.

HERO. Hunger is a dreadful thing, Excellency! It undermines all sense. It even destroys the vital herd instinct.

GREEN TROLL. Then you had better make arrangements to cross the bridge before you fall a prey to the same madness. Hoof, hide, horns, and all! Which of you is it to be?

SOLO. *[Whirling suddenly, his eyes blazing]* Me! You want a taste of my horns? *[He charges toward the bridge, but HERO and CREDO grab him, holding him back]* I'll give you my horns in your gluttonous guts!

CREDO & HERO. *[Struggling to hold him]* Stop it!

SOLO. You want my hoof? I'll plant my hoof in your putrid faces and trample them to mush! *[To Hero and Credo]* Let go of me, you fools! If you won't make an effort to save yourselves, let me try to save us all! *[They succeed in dragging him to his knees and holding him fast]* Do you want to be gobbled up hide and all?

CREDO. *[Placing a soothing hand on Solo's head and raising his eyes piously toward Trolls]* Hush! Hush! Try to recover your sense of values. The ways of the infinite are not our ways! We cannot understand them. We must not question them. We can only trust them without reservation!

SOLO. But they are not infinite, I tell you!

CREDO. Hush! Why do you fear to be devoured? Does the sacrifice seem too great? Remember that sacrifice is the essence of faith, and faith is the essence of sacrifice. The faith of the herd must sustain us now! Greater faith hath no Billy Goat than this: that he should lay down his hide for the herd.

SOLO. *[Wrenching himself free and rising]* Faith of the herd! You

twist faith out of all recognition! You'll not feed me to those putrescent hobgoblins. There's nothing infinite about them but their appetites!

CREDO. You have no faith!

SOLO. I have no faith in monsters! Whatever shape the infinite may wear, it's not the shapes of horror on that bridge! How can you pay homage to them? Even the most sublime avowal of faith becomes superstitious mockery when you offer it at their feet!

HERO. *[Shouting]* Stop it! Stop it I tell you!

SOLO. *[Turning on him]* And don't you start mouthing about herd instinct, either! He converts faith into superstition! You degrade loyalty into regimental conformity! Heroic words become hollow sham when you utter them. If you had any real concern for the welfare of the herd, you wouldn't be so eager to shove one of us into their jaws!

HERO. You must consider the greatest good . . .

SOLO. The greatest good for the greatest number! Yes! Well the greatest number is three! That's all of us. Listen to me! *[He draws them Down Right and kneels in a tight group]* I've discovered something! The Trolls are not infinite! *[They shudder away from him]* It's true! They admitted it! If they are not infinite, they are not omnipotent either! You know what I think?

CREDO & HERO. *[Pulling away]* We don't want to know!

SOLO. *[Forcing them to listen]* I think it's your blind superstitious belief that gives them the power to sit there smirking and smacking their lips over us! You flatter them! You fawn on them! You protect them! Why? *[He rises]* They are nothing! Nothing but delusions!

HERO. *[Furious]* Shut up! Shut up, up, up! You'll bring destruction on us all! If you must express yourself, don't talk, just bleat!

SOLO. *[Disgusted, he stalks out Right]* Baaaahh!

GREEN TROLL. There's no use wasting your time on him. Do you want to cross the bridge or not?

CREDO. *[Falling on his knees]* Oh, yes, Majesty! But we can't leave a member of the herd to starve among the rocks, mad though he is.

HERO. All for one and one for all, you know!

CREDO. Yes! We realize that his conduct has been unforgiveable, but still . . .

GRAY TROLL. We are not interested in apologies. Do you wish to arrange a sacrifice?

CREDO. Yes, Majesty, but may he cross the bridge, too?

GREEN TROLL. If the price is paid!

PURPLE TROLL. It makes no difference to us . . . if the price is paid!

CREDO. Yes, Majesty! [*He turns to Hero*] Go find poor Solo. Bring him back.

HERO. I can't drag him back by myself! He's bigger than I am!

CREDO. There's no need to drag him. He will come willingly. Just tell him he is free to cross the bridge.

HERO. Free to cross . . .

CREDO. Yes! Tell him the price has been paid.

HERO. But we haven't decided . . .

CREDO. I have decided! I shall pay the price before you return.

HERO. But that is irregular! We must hold a proper council to choose a sacrifice!

CREDO. No, my friend! This duty calls for the free choice of a willing spirit. The duty is clearly mine. I have heard the call. [*He places one foot dramatically on the approach to the bridge*] It is a far, far better thing that I do now than I have ever done. It is a far greener pasture that I go to than I have ever browsed. Go now. Go find poor Solo!

HERO. [*With oratorical fervor*] Your name will live forever as savior of the herd! Hail, immortal Billy Credo! Hail, and farewell! Baaaahh! [*He turns and trots out*]

PURPLE TROLL. That was very touching!

GREEN TROLL. Yes! Such truly noble sentiments lift the heart and whet the appetite.

GRAY TROLL. [*Impatiently, moving forward*] Shall we proceed with the sacrifice?

CREDO. [*Backing away*] Well . . . as to that, Majesty, I'm ready! Even eager! Only . . .

GREEN TROLL. Only what? [*The Trolls move menacingly around Credo, blocking his way*]

CREDO. [*Terrified*] Only . . . I . . . I haven't been eating well lately, you know! For many weeeks I've only nibbled a bit, here and there, leaving the larger share for them. Being much larger than I am, their need was greater than mine.

GRAY TROLL. So?

CREDO. So I'm only a small batch of hide and bone, Majesty! Hardly a proper meal for you!

PURPLE TROLL. Well, well, that can't be helped.

CREDO. Perhaps it could, Majesty! [*He glances quickly to be sure Hero is gone*] If you would consider letting me cross the bridge on . . .

on faith as it were! A few days in that tall grass would fill me out in no time! I'd be fine and fat! A decent meal for you!

GREEN TROLL. How very considerate! But you need not fret yourself on that account!

PURPLE TROLL. We are not very fond of fat. It's too rich for our taste. *[The Trolls close in closer. CREDO crouches terrified]*

GREEN TROLL. It gives us indigestion into the bargain.

GRAY TROLL. Besides, a soft diet is bad for the teeth! What we really enjoy is the crunch of bone!

PURPLE TROLL. *[Eagerly]* And a tough, chewy hide!

GREEN TROLL. Yes! Big bones! Crunchy bones! Snap! Crackle! Crunch!

CREDO. *[Cowering to the ground]* Oh, don't . . . don't! I'm afraid I've made an over-hasty decision!

GRAY TROLL. What's the matter now?

CREDO. *[Desperately]* Well, you see, Majesty, if a sacrifice is to have any true worth . . . any real meaning . . . it must be the best we have to offer.

PURPLE TROLL. True! Very true!

CREDO. *[With more hope]* The unworthy sacrifice is no sacrifice at all!

GREEN TROLL. True again!

CREDO. *[Gaining confidence]* It's insignificant! Inadequate!

GRAY TROLL. We quite agree. But what's the point?

CREDO. *[Tragically]* The point is . . . I'm not a fit offering for you! *[He collapses in shame]*

GRAY TROLL. Don't underestimate yourself. You have the true Billy Goat spirit!

PURPLE TROLL. You are the very essence of Billy Goat!

GREEN TROLL. Yes, indeed! Your every word made us fairly drool with anticipation. The spirit of Billy Goat!

CREDO. Oh, thank you, Majesties! But it's not a question of spirit. It's my bones. I have very small bones for a Billy Goat. Small and rather brittle.

TROLLS. *[Drawing back a bit]* Ugh!

CREDO. *[Eagerly]* Besides that, I'm very thin-skinned. I'm embarrassed to offer myself!

GRAY TROLL. You should be! *[The TROLLS withdraw to bridge]*

CREDO. I'm so ashamed! How could I have been so selfish when