



Baba Yaga Witch

Readers Theater Play Script and Performance Notes

AUTHORS: Benjamin Knight, COUNTRY: Russia, GENRE: Fairytales



CHARACTERS

NATASHA

GRIGORI

NARRATOR

INGA

AGATA – *gate*

ANASTASIA

YAKOV – *dog*

BABA YAGA

DMITRI – *cat*

**Performance notes can be found on the pages following the script*

Scene 1 – Natasha’s House

[**Stage set:** A decrepit, ramshackle hut made of wood. NATASHA and her father GRIGORI sit at a dinner table talking quietly and laughing. There is a set of Russian nesting dolls on the table. That’s a classic kind of Russian toy doll. If you’d like to see what they look like, Google: “Russian nesting dolls.”]

[NARRATOR enters.]

NARRATOR:

Hello, everyone. This play is “Baba Yaga.” It’s as famous in Russia as “Cinderella” is here. The story is brought to you by *Stories to Grow by*.

[NARRATOR steps forward. Hugs shoulders and shivers]

NARRATOR:

It’s cold out here in the tundra of Russia. “Tundra” means no trees, and this land is flat and COLD. But inside the hut where Natasha lives with her father, Grigori (pronounce: grih-GORY) (*gestures to Natasha and Grigori*), it’s warm. That’s what a big cozy fire will do.

[NARRATOR exits.]

NATASHA:

(*laughs*) You’re silly, Papa. There aren’t any monsters in the forest – except maybe the witch Baba Yaga!

GRIGORI:

That old legend! This monster was real, I swear, hand on heart! I went out to collect firewood on Tuesday morning and I saw this big nasty-looking thing come out from the trees!

NATASHA:

Yikes! What did it look like?

GRIGORI:

Well, it was hairy, with thick black fur! And HUGE teeth! (*picks up two pieces of bread and holds them to mouth as if they are teeth, making growling sounds*) Grrr!

NATASHA:

(*laughs*) And what did it do?

GRIGORI:

Oh, it slowly ambled up to the house, like this (*walks slowly to Natasha, swinging back and*

forth) And it said “Grigori! I’m coming to your house! I will eat you and your daughter! And all your bread and vegetables, too!” and I looked at the monster! And I said, “Monster! You will not come here, or I will... I will... wear you as a fur coat! Now begone!” And I threw some wood at him!

[GRIGORI picks up the loaf of bread and hurls it across the room.]

NATASHA:

Papa, you and your stories!

[GRIGORI pauses, then picks up the loaf of bread and brushes it off.]

GRIGORI:

Actually, we need this bread. We don’t have much food in the house.

NATASHA:

It’s all right, Papa. We’ll share what we have, the way we always do.

GRIGORI:

Actually, Natasha. I need to tell you something. There’s going to be a change in our lives. A wonderful change.

NATASHA:

What do you mean, Papa?

GRIGORI:

You see, today I met (*trill of music from offstage, as from a bell or harp*) a beautiful lady.

NATASHA:

Uh-oh.

GRIGORI:

She’s enchanting, Natasha. (*dramatically*) Her hair, her eyes... (*same trill of music*) Even her name, Inga – is spellbinding!

NATASHA:

That’s a nice name, I suppose. Though I don’t know about “spell-binding” ...

GRIGORI:

Natasha, she’s the one for me! I knew it right away. Of course I had to ask her to marry me.

NATASHA:

You didn’t HAVE to, Papa. You only just met the lady!

GRIGORI:

It felt like I've known her for years. So I asked her, right then and there!

NATASHA:

Of course she said "no," right?

GRIGORI:

She said (*same trill of music*) YES! Oh, happiest of days!

NATASHA:

(*to audience*) Oh, my goodness! (*to Grigori*) Papa, why do your eyes look so funny, all of a sudden?

GRIGORI:

(*dazed*) She's so beautiful!

NATASHA:

But Papa, I... I don't even know what she is like!

[A knock on the door from offstage.]

GRIGORI:

(*turns to look offstage*) Ah, there she is now! (*calls*) Come in, darling!

[INGA enters.]

INGA:

Grigori. Darling.

[GRIGORI sighs, lovesick. He kneels and kisses her hand.]

INGA:

(*notices Natasha*) And this is...?

GRIGORI:

Ah, yes! You remember my telling you about my daughter ... This is Natasha.

INGA:

(*deadpan*) Right. How could one forget?

NATASHA:

(*frightened*) It's a p-pleasure to... meet you.

INGA:

(turns her back on Natasha) Maybe. *(points to the fireplace)* Is it you who let the fire go out?

NATASHA:

Well no, it's actually Papa's job to keep the—

GRIGORI:

Ah! You are so observant to notice, my darling. We are nearly out of firewood. I'll go to the woodshed and chop some more. It will be another cold night.

INGA:

Darling, why strain yourself? Let Natasha do it. The fresh air will do her good.

GRIGORI:

I didn't think of that! How very considerate of you, my pet.

INGA:

I'm that way.

NATASHA:

(alarmed) Papa..!

INGA:

And besides, *(strokes Grigori's face and he purrs)* it will give us a chance to spend some quality time together.

GRIGORI:

(sighs loudly, then says sternly to Natasha) Natasha! You must go outside right away and cut more firewood.

NATASHA:

But Papa! The axe is too heavy for me! I don't even know how to use it. And it's freezing outside!

INGA:

For goodness sake! *(points dramatically to Natasha)* Does she always make EXCUSE after EXCUSE?

GRIGORI:

(to Natasha) Go now, Natasha! It's for your own good. No nonsense, now.

NATASHA:

Okay, OKAY! *(to audience)* This is not good.

[NATASHA scurries to the exit. GRIGORI fawns over INGA.]

[NARRATOR enters.]

NARRATOR:

That winter, it was Natasha who cut the wood. Natasha who fed the pigs and it was Natasha who fed the chickens. Each bitter cold morning it was Natasha who got up early to light the heat stove. When her father and Inga got married, it was Natasha who cooked the wedding feast. And who cleaned up afterward? You guessed – Natasha. The girl was so busy, it was easy to forget she was even there.

[NATASHA knocks at the door.]

INGA:

Who would bother us at this time of night?

NATASHA:

(from outside) Let me in!

GRIGORI:

(to Inga) Who could that be?

[GRIGORI goes to open the door. NATASHA enters, shivering and covered head-to-toe in dirt.]

NATASHA:

Papa, I cut the firewood, I cleaned the tools. I washed the pigs. I fed the chickens. I counted exactly how many crickets there are in the foothill at the bottom of the yard – that's 46. *(to audience)* Although I can't imagine why we needed that information! *(turns back to Father)* Can I come back inside now where it's warm?

GRIGORI:

Well, erm, I mean, if it's all right with my dear wife–

NATASHA:

Papa! I live here too, don't I?

INGA:

(to audience) Exactly the problem. *(crooning, to Natasha)* Feeding chickens and counting crickets is all well and good. But I have one more errand for you.

NATASHA:

(groans) What is it this time?

GRIGORI:

Natasha, no fuss! Listen to Mother Inga.

NATASHA:

(to audience) She's NOT my mother. *(to her father)* Oh, all right!

INGA:

(sweetly, to Grigori) Darling, didn't you say you were going to check the pigs?

GRIGORI:

Did I? Oh, I suppose I must have. Well, I'll be right back.

INGA:

Don't rush back.

[GRIGORI exits.]

INGA:

(to Natasha, in a stern voice) Child, come here. *(Natasha tentatively steps forward)* One of your dear father's shirts has torn. I need you to go to my sister, Baba Yaga, who lives in the woods. You must ask her to lend us a needle and thread.

NATASHA:

But... everyone knows that Baba Yaga, the bony-legged one, is a witch!

INGA:

That's ridiculous! Do you believe everything you hear?

NATASHA:

Baba Yaga lives in the forest. Her hut hops about on chicken legs. She follows children around and when she gets near them, she eats them!

INGA:

I will not listen to another word of this nonsense!

NATASHA:

(picks up a pin cushion and holds it up to Inga) H-here is a pin cushion with a needle and thread, Inga. Can we use this one?

INGA:

That's MOTHER Inga! *(pretends to slap the pin cushion from Natasha's hand – actually, Natasha should throw the needle and thread onto the floor so it looks as if Inga slapped it out of her hand. Note- practice so there is no actual contact)* Do NOT argue with me! I will not

tolerate your insolence! So help me, I will have your father lock you in the cellar. We'll see how you like THAT.

NATASHA:

(sadly gazing at where the needle and thread landed on the floor) So... how do I even find Baba Yaga's house in the forest?

INGA:

That's the question you SHOULD be asking. I'll show you how to find her house, all right.

[INGA approaches Natasha and pretends to squeeze and twist her nose. NATASH twitches her head, as if her nose were being twisted- remember, this is pretend!]

NATASHA:

Ouch!

INGA:

Be quiet. There, that nose of yours will point the way to Baba Yaga. Now be off with you!

NATASHA:

(looks offstage to Grigori) Papa?

[GRIGORI enters, brushing off his clothes.]

GRIGORI:

(still brushing his clothes, not looking up) Listen to your mother, Natasha.

NATASHA:

But she is not-! *(Inga "twists" her nose again)* OUCH! I mean, all right already. I'll go.

GRIGORI:

(distractedly) Knew you'd do the right thing, love.

NATASHA:

(throws up her hands in despair as she runs offstage) AUGHH!

[NATASHA exits.]

Scene 2 – Forest

[**Stage set:** Place Baba Yaga’s hut at the side of the stage, hidden by trees or other props so it’s unseen by the audience. NATASHA enters. The character who plays the gate, AGATA, stands in front of Baba Yaga’s hut. AGATA hangs her head down. (See Performance Notes for ideas on construction Baba Yaga’s Hut and the gate.)]

[At the back of the stage, ANASTASIA (servant) holds a broom. She is frozen in position. YAKOV (dog) lies at her feet. On the ground near AGATA is an oilcan. NATASHA nervously fiddles with her hands and looks around. She doesn’t notice Baba Yaga’s hut, AGATA, ANASTASIA, or YAKOV.]

NATASHA:

I’ve been wandering around in these woods for hours. I’ll never get out! I’ll have to be raised by wolves or something! Though maybe that would be better. (*rubs her nose*) Hey, my nose is throbbing. I must be getting closer!

[NATASHA turns to face BABA YAGA’s hut and notices it for the first time.]

NATASHA:

(*gazes at the scene for a moment, then turns to audience*) This must be Baba Yaga’s hut, all right. But to get in, I’ll have to pass through this rusty old gate.

[NATASHA approaches the gate AGATA, and “pushes her open.” (See Performance Notes on how to simulate opening and closing AGATA, the gate.) AGATA has a sad expression when “opened.” The actor/actress makes a loud creaking sound. Or the sound of a loudly creaking door may be played offstage from a recording.]

NATASHA:

Gosh, that’s one squeaky gate! Hmm... (*looks around, then notices the oil can on the ground*) Oh, look at that – an oilcan! Let’s see if this does the trick. (*pours a few drops of oil on Agata at three places – Agata’s head, midsection and lower legs, to simulate oiling the three hinges of a door*)

AGATA:

(*brightens*) Wow, I feel so much better! (*twists head and body while keeping the “door” open*) You know what they say, when one gate closes, another one opens! Close! (*closes*) Open! (*opens*) Close! (*closes*) Open! (*opens*) As quiet as a snowflake. Why thank you, Miss! I’m Agata (pronounce: ah-GAH-dah), the gate. Pleased to meet you.

NATASHA:

And you, too, Agata. (*to audience*) I am talking to a gate.

[NATASHA continues through the gate until she sees the servant ANASTASIA. ANASTASIA is weeping.]

NATASHA:

Ah! *(to Agata)* Excuse me a moment. *(to audience)* She must be scared by the witch Baba Yaga, poor thing. *(approaches Anastasia)* Hi, there. Say, may I help you with something?

ANASTASIA:

(cries) Hoo hoo, it's just the worst. My Mistress Baba Yaga has commanded me to sweep up all the leaves. But they're magic, so they're invisible leaves! How can I tell where they are?

NATASHA:

(pats Anastasia on the shoulder) There, there. That does sound like a tough break. *(rummages through her pockets and produces a small handkerchief)* Here, take this handkerchief. Dry your tears.

[ANASTASIA takes the handkerchief and dabs her eyes. She sneezes into it. Then she hands back the handkerchief to NATASHA.]

NATASHA:

Uh, you can keep it. It's fine, really.

ANASTASIA:

(in disbelief) Nobody has ever given me anything before. I could... I could... *(starts sobbing again, into the handkerchief)*

[YAKOV is roused from his sleep.]

YAKOV:

(looks at Natasha) Growl!

NATASHA:

(reels in fear, then nervously) Doggy! You sound... hungry.

[NATASHA rummages through her pockets and pulls out a piece of cloth. The cloth has bits of food inside.]

YAKOV:

Growl!

NATASHA:

You'd like a little beef, right? Here's some bread, even.

[NATASHA sets the food on the rock and steps back. She is afraid to feed the dog from her hand.]

NATASHA:

Go ahead, now. There.

YAKOV:

(looks at food on rock and sniffs it) Woof, woof! Pork chops? I haven't had real meat in years!

NATASHA:

Not a very big pork chop, but... *(to audience)* My goodness, the dog talks, too!

[YAKOV walks on all fours over to the rock and licks up the food.]

YAKOV:

(smacks lips in satisfaction) Meat and bread, too. Not bad!

NATASHA:

Glad you like it.

[NATASHA stands in front of BABA YAGA'S HUT. The actor playing BABA YAGA stands behind BABA YAGA'S HUT and moves the HUT. The hut begins to "chase" Natasha and mirrors her movements to the right and to the left as she tries to get away.]

[NATASHA takes a couple of steps backward, toward the audience. HUT takes a couple of steps forward, toward NATASHA. NATASHA runs a few steps and HUT follows her, also running a few steps. At the end of this exchange, HUT should end up at the edge of the stage near where BABA YAGA's offstage voice will call out in a few seconds.]

NATASHA:

(to audience) Heavens! What they say about Baba Yaga's hut is true!

BABA YAGA'S voice:

(from behind Baba Yaga's Hut) Come in and take the weight off your feet, dearie. It's as cheap to sit as it is to stand.

NATASHA:

I'm coming. *(cautiously steps toward Baba Yaga's Hut)*

[If BABA YAGA'S HUT has a door that actually opens, then NATASHA steps inside the door of BABA YAGA'S HUT. If BABA YAGA's HUT is a divider with a door that is painted, then NATASHA walks around the edge of the divider where the doorknob is painted, simulating the action of walking inside.]

Scene 3 – Interior of Baba Yaga’s hut

[**Stage set:** A dark and dingy wooden hut. In one corner sits a loom. (See **Performance Notes** for ideas on simulating a loom.) In the other sits a rocking chair containing BABA YAGA. Near the loom is a roll of wax paper that will be the magic towel later in the scene. BABA YAGA is weaving. As she draws the “shuttle” across, there is a clickety-clacking sound. The sound can be made offstage by clapping together two blocks.]

[NATASHA enters.]

NATASHA:

Uh... hello?

BABA YAGA:

(stops weaving) Do my eyes deceive me? You must be my very own niece that my sister told me about *(to audience)* How very thoughtful of my sister! *(turns back to Natasha)* Have you come to visit your Auntie Baba Yaga?

NATASHA:

Just a quick visit, really. Mother Inga sent me to borrow a needle and thread. Do you have that? It’s okay if you don’t. In fact, I’ll just be moving on now, if you please. *(turns to leave)*

BABA YAGA:

But you must stay a bit and visit. Hmm, how long have you been traveling in the woods, niece?

NATASHA:

A while.

BABA YAGA:

(holds nose) Well, you smell absolutely ghastly! I’ll tell you what. I’ll have my servant run you a hot bath. Doesn’t that sound nice?

NATASHA:

(reluctantly) I suppose...

BABA YAGA:

While she’s doing that, can you take my place at the loom? *(points at the loom)* I’m weaving a blanket to cover my bony old legs. But I barely have time to work on it.

NATASHA:

There’s no harm in a little weaving, right?

BABA YAGA:

How could there be?

[NATASHA goes to sit at the loom. As she draws the “shuttle” across the loom, there is the same clickety-clacking sound. Again, this can be created by an actor offstage clapping two blocks together.]

BABA YAGA:

Keep it up, dearie. *(to audience)* That will keep her busy while her bath is readied. *(calls off-stage)* Anastasia!

[ANASTASIA enters. She does a double take when she notices NATASHA. As ANASTASIA talks to NATASHA later in the scene, NATASHA continues to weave. There is still a clickety-clacking sound from off-stage but it should be softer so the audience can hear ANASTASIA and NATASHA talking.]

ANASTASIA:

Yes, ma’am.

BABA YAGA:

Fill the bath and make it hot. I’m going to warm up young Natasha so she cooks very nicely. If you know what I mean. *(cackles)*

[BABA YAGA exits. ANASTASIA waits until she is gone. Then ANASTASIA tip-toes over to NATASHA and taps her on the shoulder.]

ANASTASIA:

Miss?

NATASHA:

Oh, hi there! I’m glad you’re better now.

ANASTASIA:

I may be. But you’re not.

NATASHA:

Why do you say that?

ANASTASIA:

My Mistress told me to draw a bath for you. A hot one. You know what that means, don’t you?

NATASHA:

Not really. What?

ANASTASIA:

This (*airquotes*) “bath” of yours is really Baba Yaga’s way of cooking you for dinner!

NATASHA:

What? Really? (*clutches Anastasia’s sleeve*) I’m in terrible trouble – you must help me!

ANASTASIA:

I wish I could, my friend. But I must do as my Mistress commands. Or I will suffer the same fate.

NATASHA:

Of course. (*thoughtfully*) You know, there might be a way.

ANASTASIA:

What?

NATASHA:

Draw the bath, just as your Mistress has commanded.

ANASTASIA:

Really?

NATASHA:

But use a sieve (pronounce: SIV), a container with holes, to pour in the water. That way the water will keep dribbling out through the holes. The bath will fill very slowly. You’ll still be doing her bidding, though.

ANASTASIA:

(*nods*) Yes, I suppose so. I just hope it gives you enough time.

[ANASTASIA and NATASHA clasp hands for a moment. Then ANASTASIA exits.]

NATASHA:

(*to audience, resuming the weaving*) I may have delayed my fate. But what good is it? I still have to get out of here! Yet if I leave this loom, even for a moment, Baba Yaga will notice the sound of the loom has stopped.

BABA YAGA:

(*from off-stage*) Are you weaving, little niece? Are you weaving, my pretty?

NATASHA:

(*calling to Baba Yaga*) I am weaving, Auntie!

[DMITRI enters. DMITRI looks around and begins to circle ANASTASIA.]

DMITRI:

Meow! I'm Dmitri (pronounce: (pronounce: duh-MEET-tree) the cat. haven't noticed you here before. Have you seen any mice? I haven't eaten in three days. Meow!

NATASHA:

Not a one. But I'll tell you what. I have something left in my pocket I think you may like. (*takes the cloth out of her pocket*) Look – cheese! (*hands to Dmitri*)

DMITRI:

Cheese? (*eats it*) And it's Bryndza! [pronounce "BRIN-zeh"] Ooh, I haven't tasted Bryndza cheese since I was a kitten! (*arms up-stretched*) Meow! (*to Natasha*) Little girl, if you have any smarts at all, I imagine you want to get out of here.

NATASHA:

Oh catkin, more than anything!

DMITRI:

But if you run away... Meow!...the loom will stop. My Mistress will be warned.

NATASHA:

Don't I know it!

DMITRI:

So here's what I can do, child. Step aside. I'll take over the weaving for you.

NATASHA:

You would do that?

DMITRI:

A lick of cheese goes a long way. (*to audience, licks lips*) Ah! I can still taste that Brynzda cheese!

[NATASHA leaps off the seat of the loom, while DMITRI jumps on almost instantly. He picks up the weaving where she left off. The roll of wax paper should be near the loom.]

DMITRI:

One more thing. Take that towel. (*nods to it*) It's magic. (*Natasha picks up the "towel," a roll of wax paper without its cardboard box*) Trust me.

NATASHA:

You're a talking cat. I trust you.

DMITRI:

Meow! Now skedaddle! Scat!

[NATASHA exits, quickly.]

Scene 4 – Forest

[**Stage set:** Scene is laid out similarly to Scene 2, except a giant mortar and pestle lies to the edge of stage. (See **Performance Notes** as to construction of the mortar and pestle.) AGATA and YAKOV lie in wait. Enter NATASHA hurriedly. She tries to cross the stage, but YAKOV lunges toward her.]

YAKOV:

(*growls*) A-ha! An escaped child! (*recognizes her, and says softly*) Oh, it's the kind little girl! If it weren't for you, miss, my tummy would still be rumbling. Go on now. Get away with you, and don't let my Mistress Baba Yaga see you.

[NATASHA continues across the stage and arrives at the gate, AGATA. NATASHA gently pushes AGATA, and the gate door slowly opens.]

AGATA:

I make no noise anymore, thanks to you!

[NATASHA passes through, and AGATA quietly closes. NATASHA gives a "thumbs up" sign to AGATA, and AGATA returns the signal. NATASHA exits.]

BABA YAGA (from offstage):

All right, everyone. Line up. I said, NOW!

[ANASTASIA, DMITRI, AGATA and YAKOV, all enter and line up.]

[BABA YAGA enters.]

BABA YAGA:

Now, which one of you miserable lot will tell me how that CHILD escaped? (*to Dmitri*) How about you, Dmitri? Why didn't you scratch the little girl's eyes out?

DMITRI:

Meow! In all the years I've served you, you have given me only water and made me hunt for my dinner. Meow! The girl gave me real cheese.

BABA YAGA:

Ungrateful varmint! I'll throw you in the deep water, mark my words. (*to Anastasia*) Servant! What of you? Why did you take so long to fill the bath?

ANASTASIA:

Mistress, in all the years I have served you, you have never so much as given me a rag. But that girl gave me a pretty handkerchief.

BABA YAGA:

Infernal wretch! (*to Yakov*) Yakov (pronounce: YAH-kov)! You miserable hound. Why did you not tear her to pieces when she ran out of the house?

YAKOV:

Woof! In all the years that I have served you, you never threw me anything but an old bone. But the girl gave me real meat and bread.

BABA YAGA:

Grr! You'll be lucky to get as much as one dry bone in the future. (*to Agata*) And you, gate! Why didn't you squeak when she opened you?

AGATA:

In all the years that I have served you, Mistress, you never so much as sprinkled a drop of oil on me. I could hardly stand the sound of my own creaking. But the girl oiled me. Now I swing back and forth without a sound. Look! (*opens and closes, happily*)

BABA YAGA:

We'll see how happy you are when I dismantle you and sell you for scrap! (*Agata is alarmed*) Ungrateful servants, all of you! Worthless! (*to audience*) You can't get decent help anymore! (*to all Servants*) No matter. If you want something done properly –

[BABA YAGA wears or rides the giant mortar and wields the giant pestle. (See Performance Notes for suggestions on how to simulate a giant mortar and pestle.)]

BABA YAGA:

...you have to do it yourself! Begone, all of you!

[AGATA, ANASTASIA, DMITRI and YAKOV run offstage, frightened.]

BABA YAGA:

Now where could that girl be?

[NATASHA enters on the opposite side of stage. She doesn't notice BABA YAGA, and she looks around.]

NATASHA:

My nose might have led me to the witch's hut, but it's definitely not leading me out of here!

BABA YAGA:

Aha! I have you now!

NATASHA:

Oh no!

[Chase scene. BABA YAGA chases NATASHA around in circles.]

NATASHA:

(*to audience*) Wait, I just remembered! The towel!

[NATASHA rolls out the roll of wax paper in front of Baba Yaga, creating an imaginary 'river' between them. BABA YAGA jumps back.]

NATASHA:

Wow! The towel actually turned into a river!

BABA YAGA:

Curses! Why did I ever create a magic towel in the first place? And how did she get her hands on it?

NATASHA:

Now's my chance! I'm out of here!

[NATASHA runs offstage.]

BABA YAGA:

I despise water, so I can't cross! Drat!

[BABA YAGA exits offstage, at the opposite side.]

Scene 5 – Natasha’s House

[Stage set: The layout is the same as in Scene 1. GRIGORI is fawning over INGA.]

INGA:

Oh, my handsome husband. You give me far too much attention! But what was that part about how beautiful I am?

GRIGORI:

Darling. Your eyes are as deep as Lake Baikal (pronounce: bike-uhl). You move with the elegance of a Siberian Tiger. Your hair (*Inga runs her fingers through her hair*) is as silky as–

INGA:

(*shakes hair and head*) Oh, don’t I know it! Don’t I know it!

[There’s a knock at the door, simulated from off-stage. GRIGORI and INGA look at each other, shocked.]

GRIGORI:

Who could that be?

[INGA shrugs. GRIGORI goes to open the door. NATASHA enters, shivering in the cold.]

NATASHA:

Papa!

GRIGORI:

Natasha – you’re back!

[NATASHA and GRIGORI hug.]

INGA:

What?!?

GRIGORI:

(*shakes head and rubs eyes, as if returning from a trance*) Natasha! How could this be? We were afraid we would never see you again!

INGA:

(*under her breath*) Speak for yourself. (*to Natasha*) Whatever happened to you?

NATASHA:

Father, (*points to Inga*) SHE sent me to the woods, to the witch Baba Yaga. So I would be eaten by her, deep in the forest!

INGA:

That's an outrageous lie! I will not dignify it with a response.

GRIGORI:

(*to Inga*) Inga, the truth. Did you send my daughter to be eaten by the witch Baba Yaga?

INGA:

I... no! I mean, not exactly... You're making an elephant out of a fly, my dearest. This whole matter is of no consequence, anyway.

NATASHA:

Father, Baba Yaga is her SISTER! And that means SHE (*points to Inga*) is a witch, too!

GRIGORI:

What?!

INGA:

Insolent child! (*to Grigori*) Grigori, darling. Isn't it better around here without that yapping child underfoot, getting in the way?

GRIGORI:

(*shakes his head*) What, yapping? Underfoot? Wait a minute. (*holds hands to ears and shakes head*) I feel different, somehow. (*to Inga*) Ah, I see everything clearly now! You're an enchantress!

INGA:

Yes, (*flirtingly to Grigori*) I am enchanting, am I not?

GRIGORI:

(*growls*) That's not what I meant! How could I send my own daughter away? (*rushes to Natasha and puts his arms around her*)

INGA:

Grigori, darling. Remember, (*points to Natasha*) she WANTED to go to the woods!

NATASHA:

What?!?

INGA:

Admit it!

NATASHA:

I'll do no such thing!

GRIGORI:

Nothing you say is true! I am no longer under your spell! (*picks up a shovel and holds it threateningly*)

INGA:

Grigori. Let's not be rash!

GRIGORI:

Begone with you, witch! (*chases Inga with the shovel*)

INGA:

Hissssss!

[INGA runs offstage.]

GRIGORI:

(*yells to Inga*) And don't ever come back!

INGA:

(*from offstage*) Curses!

GRIGORI:

(*kneels before Natasha*) My sweet daughter. How could this have happened? I wish we could go back to how we were before.

NATASHA:

Papa, that's what I want more than anything!

GRIGORI:

Sent off to the woods, all alone you were. How frightening it must have been!

NATASHA:

It was. But I met some friends who had troubles of their own. I wonder if I'll ever see them again.

[A knock at the door.]

NATASHA:

Who could that be?

GRIGORI:

Come in.

[ANASTASIA, YAKOV, AGATA and DMITRI stand at the door.]

NATASHA:

I can't believe it! How did you find me?

ANASTASIA:

When Baba Yaga was chasing you, we followed your tracks and they led us here.

AGATA:

To this nice warm house.

YAKOV:

Woof, woof!

DMITRI:

Meow!

NATASHA:

These are the friends I met in the woods, Papa.

DMITRI:

Meow! Any mice?

NATASHA:

(to Dmitri) There lots of mice here, Dmitri.

DMITRI:

Ah, goody.

YAKOV:

Woof! Pork choppa?

GRIGORI:

I could rustle up some pork chops.

YAKOV:

(happy) Woof!

AGATA:

Need a gate?

GRIGORI:

A nice gate is always welcome.

NATASHA:

Come inside, come in, everyone!

GRIGORI:

Any friend of Natasha's is welcome here.

ALL:

Hooray!

YAKOV:

Woof! I will guard this house.

DMITRI:

Meow! I will keep it free of mice.

AGATA:

I will be the perfect gate.

ANASTASIA:

And I will be your playmate, Natasha. (*clasps hands with Natasha*)

[NARRATOR enters.]

NARRATOR:

From then on, they all lived together in Grigori's hut. So maybe it was a little crowded. But it was fun to all be together.

[ANASTASIA, YAKOV, AGATA and DMITRI each pick up a nesting doll and holds it on their respective head. Lined up in a row of four, the 1st and 3rd of them bends down while 2nd and 4th of them remains standing up; in the next moment, the 1st and 3rd of them straightens up while the 2nd and 4th of them bends down. They are playing.]

NARRATOR:

Natasha, her father, and their new friends lived happily together for many years to come. And so our story ends with friends and happiness. As may yours, too.

[If you have a curtain, close it now. If you do not, fade the lights. If you have no stage lights, all actors come on stage and bow to the audience.]

[All bow.]