**Master Maid
A Tale of Norway**

**Told by Aaron Shepard**

**(You can adapt this play)**

NARRATOR 1:  Once there was a lad named Leif.

NARRATOR 4:  Now, Leif was a likeable fellow, and handsome to boot.

NARRATOR 2:  But he never wanted to listen to anyone,

NARRATOR 3:  and he always had to do things his own way.

NARRATOR 1:  His father told him,

FATHER:  My son, it’s good to make up your own mind. But it’s also good to know when others know more than you.

NARRATOR 4:  Now, Leif didn’t want to hear that either, so he said,

LEIF:  Father, I’m going out into the world, where I can do things just as I like.

NARRATOR 2:  His father begged Leif not to go, but the more he pleaded, the more Leif was set on it. Finally his father said,

FATHER:  Your stubbornness is bound to land you in trouble. But at least take this piece of advice. Whatever you do, *don’t go to work for the troll.*

NARRATOR 3:  So where do you think Leif went? Right to the house of the troll!

NARRATOR 1:  Leif knocked on the door, and the troll himself answered it.

NARRATOR 4:  He was huge, and a good deal uglier than anyone you’d care to meet.

LEIF:  Pardon me, sir. I’m looking for work.

TROLL:  Are you, now?

NARRATOR 2:  . . . said the troll, feeling the boy’s arm.

TROLL:  I could use a fellow like you.

NARRATOR 3:  The troll led him into the stable and said,

TROLL:  I’m taking my goats to pasture. Since it’s your first day, I won’t ask much of you. Just shovel out all this dung.

LEIF:  Well, that’s kind of you, sir. You’re surely easy to please!

TROLL:  But just one thing. Don’t go looking through the rooms of the house, or you won’t live to tell about it. *(leaves)*

NARRATOR 1:  When the troll had gone, Leif said to himself,

LEIF:  Not look through the house? Why, that’s *just* what I want to do!

NARRATOR 4:  So Leif went through all the rooms till he came to the kitchen. And there stirring a big iron pot was the loveliest maiden he had ever seen.

MASTER MAID:  *(shocked)* Good Lord! What are you doing here?

LEIF:  I’ve just got a job with the troll.

MASTER MAID:  Then heaven help you get out of it! Weren’t you warned about working here?

LEIF:  I was, but I’m glad I came anyway, else I never would have met *you.*

NARRATOR 2:  Well, the girl liked *that* answer, so they sat down to chat. They talked and talked and talked some more, and before the day was done, he held her hand in his.

NARRATOR 3:  Then the girl asked,

MASTER MAID:  What did the troll tell you to do today?

LEIF:  Something easy. I’ve only to clear the dung from the stable.

MASTER MAID:  Easy to say! But if you use the pitchfork the ordinary way, ten forkfuls will fly in for every one you throw out! Now, here’s what you must do. Turn the pitchfork around and shovel with the handle. Then the dung will fly out by itself.

NARRATOR 1:  Leif went out to the stable and took up the pitchfork. But he said to himself,

LEIF:  That can’t be true, what she told me.

NARRATOR 1:  . . . and he shoveled the ordinary way.

NARRATOR 4:  Within moments, he was up to his neck in dung.

LEIF:  I guess her way wouldn’t hurt to try!

NARRATOR 2:  So he turned the pitchfork around and shoveled with the handle. In no time at all, the dung was all out, and the stable looked like he had scrubbed it.

NARRATOR 3:  As Leif started back to the house, the troll came up with the goats.

TROLL:  Is the stable clean?

LEIF:  Tight and tidy!

NARRATOR 3:  . . . and he showed it to him.

TROLL:  You never figured this out for yourself! Have you been talking to my Master Maid?

LEIF:  Master Maid? Now, what sort of thing might that be, sir?

TROLL:  You’ll find out soon enough.

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NARRATOR 1:  The next morning, the troll was again to go off with his goats. He told Leif,

TROLL:  Today I’ll give you another easy job. Just go up the hill to the pasture and fetch my stallion.

LEIF:  Thank you, sir. That won’t be any trouble.

TROLL:  But mind you stay out of the rooms of the house, or I’ll make an end of you. *(leaves)*

NARRATOR 4:  When the troll had gone off, Leif went right to the kitchen and sat down again with the girl the troll had called Master Maid.

MASTER MAID:  Didn’t the troll threaten you against coming here?

LEIF:  He did, but he’ll have to do worse, to keep me away from *you.*

NARRATOR 2:  So they talked and talked and talked some more, and before the day was done, he had his arm around her.

NARRATOR 3:  Then Master Maid asked,

MASTER MAID:  What work did the troll give you today?

LEIF:  Nothing hard. I just have to fetch his stallion from the hillside.

MASTER MAID:  Yes, but how will you manage? It will charge at you, shooting flame from its mouth and nostrils! But here’s how to do it. Take that bridle hanging by the door and hold it before you as you get near. Then the stallion will be tame as a pussycat.

NARRATOR 1:  So Leif threw the bridle over his shoulder and went up the hill to the pasture. But he said to himself,

LEIF:  That horse looks gentle enough.

NARRATOR 1:  . . . and he started right over to it.

NARRATOR 4:  As soon as the stallion saw him, it charged at him, shooting flame just as Master Maid had said.

NARRATOR 2:  Barely in time, Leif got the bridle off his shoulder and held it before him. The stallion stopped, as tame as you please, and Leif bridled it and rode it back to the stable.

NARRATOR 3:  On his way out, he met the troll coming home with the goats.

TROLL:  Did you bring home the stallion?

LEIF:  Safe and sound!

NARRATOR 3:  . . . and he showed him.

TROLL:  You never figured this out for yourself! Have you been talking to my Master Maid?

LEIF:  Master Maid? Didn’t you mention that yesterday? I’d certainly like to know what it is!

TROLL:  All in good time.

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NARRATOR 1:  The next morning, before the troll left with the goats, he said,

TROLL:  I want you to go to the mountain today and collect my tunnel tax from the fairies.

LEIF:  All right, sir. I’m sure I can figure it out.

TROLL:  But just keep out of the rooms of the house, or you won’t make it through another day. *(leaves)*

NARRATOR 4:  As soon as the troll had left, off went Leif to the kitchen and once more sat down with Master Maid.

MASTER MAID:  Aren’t you the least bit afraid of the troll?

LEIF:  I am, but not near as much as I’m in love with *you.*

NARRATOR 2:  So they talked and talked and talked some more, and before the day was done, she gave him a nice big kiss.

NARRATOR 3:  Then Master Maid asked,

MASTER MAID:  What are you to do for the troll today?

LEIF:  Something simple. I’m to go to the mountain and collect the tunnel tax from the fairies.

MASTER MAID:  Simple if you know how! You’re lucky I’m here to tell you! Take that club that’s leaning against the wall and strike it against the mountain. The rock will open up, and a fairy will ask you how much you want. Be sure to say, “Just as much as I can carry.”

NARRATOR 1:  So Leif took the club to the mountain and struck it against the side. The rock split wide open, and out came one of the fairies. Through the crack, Leif could see piles and piles of silver, gold, and gems.

LEIF:  I’ve come for the troll’s tunnel tax.

FAIRY:  How much do you want?

NARRATOR 1:  . . . asked the fairy.

NARRATOR 4:  Now, Leif figured it wouldn’t hurt to ask for extra and then keep some for himself. So he said,

LEIF:  As much as you can give me.

NARRATOR 4:  As soon as he said it, silver, gold, and gems came streaming out of the mountain and piled up around him. In a few moments he was nearly buried, but the treasure kept coming.

LEIF:  I’ve changed my mind! Just as much as I can carry!

NARRATOR 2:  The pile of treasure flew back into the mountain, and the fairy handed him a sack.

NARRATOR 3:  As Leif arrived back, he met the troll.

TROLL:  Did you collect my tax?

LEIF:  Done and delivered!

NARRATOR 3:  He opened the sack, and silver, gold, and gems overflowed onto the ground.

TROLL:  You never figured this out for yourself! You’ve been talking with my Master Maid!

LEIF:  Master Maid? This is the third time you’ve spoken of it, sir. I wish I could see it for myself!

TROLL:  It won’t be long now.

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NARRATOR 1:  The next morning, the troll brought Leif to Master Maid.

TROLL:  *(to MASTER MAID)* Cut him up and throw him in the stew. And wake me when he’s done.

NARRATOR 1:  Then he lay down on a bench and started snoring.

NARRATOR 4:  Master Maid took a butcher knife down from the wall.

LEIF:  You wouldn’t!

MASTER MAID:  Don’t be silly!

NARRATOR 4:  She pricked the tip of her little finger and squeezed three drops of blood onto a three-legged stool. Then she put some old rags and shoe soles in the stewpot, along with the kitchen garbage, and a couple of dead rats, and some dung for good measure.

NARRATOR 2:  Then she gathered a wooden comb, a lump of salt, and a flask of water.

MASTER MAID:  Quick! We must flee while we can!

LEIF:  Are you sure we need to rush?

NARRATOR 3:  But Master Maid pushed him out the door and over to the stable. They saddled two mares and rode away at full gallop.

NARRATOR 1:  Meanwhile, the troll was stirring from his sleep. Without opening his eyes, he called,

TROLL:  *(eyes still closed)* Is he ready?

NARRATOR 4:  The first drop of blood answered in Master Maid’s voice.

MASTER MAID:  *(voice only, from offstage)* Tough as leather!

NARRATOR 4:  So the troll went back to sleep.

NARRATOR 2:  A little later, the troll woke again and called,

TROLL:  *(eyes still closed)* Is he cooked?

NARRATOR 3:  The second drop of blood said,

MASTER MAID:  *(offstage)* Still chewy.

NARRATOR 3:  The troll went to sleep again.

NARRATOR 1:  At last, the troll woke and called,

TROLL:  Isn’t he done yet?

NARRATOR 4:  The third drop of blood said,

MASTER MAID:  *(offstage)* Tender and juicy!

NARRATOR 2:  Still half asleep, the troll stumbled over to the pot. He scooped up some stew in a wooden ladle, and took a big mouthful. It was barely in his mouth when he sprayed it across the room.

TROLL:  *(spews and sputters)* That little witch!

NARRATOR 2:  Then his eyes grew wide.

TROLL:  She must have run off with the boy!

NARRATOR 3:  The troll raced to the stable and saddled his stallion. Then he rode after them like a whirlwind, with the stallion breathing fire as it went.

NARRATOR 1:  In a little while, Leif looked behind and saw the troll chasing them.

LEIF:  We’re done for!

NARRATOR 4:  But Master Maid threw the wooden fork over her shoulder and shouted,

MASTER MAID:

Fork of wood, bless my soul.
Turn to trees and stop the troll.

NARRATOR 2:  The fork changed to a thick forest that blocked the troll’s way. The troll said,

TROLL:  I know how to deal with this,

NARRATOR 2:  . . . and he called out,

TROLL:

Forest Chewer, curse her soul.
Chew the forest, help the troll.

NARRATOR 3:  The Forest Chewer appeared out of nowhere and devoured the trees, making a path for the troll’s horse.

NARRATOR 1:  Leif looked back and again saw the troll.

LEIF:  We’re lost!

NARRATOR 4:  But Master Maid tossed the lump of salt behind her.

MASTER MAID:

Lump of salt, bless my soul.
Grow to mountain, stop the troll.

NARRATOR 2:  The salt turned to a craggy mountain, and the troll again had to stop.

TROLL:  I know how to handle this, too!

Mountain Cruncher, curse her soul.
Crunch the mountain, help the troll.

NARRATOR 3:  The Mountain Cruncher appeared and bored a tunnel, straight through the mountain.

NARRATOR 1:  Meanwhile, Leif and Master Maid came to a sea, where they found a sailboat tied up. They left the horses, boarded the boat, and sailed for the far shore.

NARRATOR 4:  They were halfway across when the troll rode up to the water.

TROLL:  I can take care of this, as well!

Water Sucker, curse her soul.
Suck the water, help the troll.

NARRATOR 2:  The Water Sucker appeared and started drinking up the sea.

NARRATOR 3:  Soon the boat was scraping bottom.

LEIF:  It’s the end of us!

NARRATOR 1:  But Master Maid took out her flask.

MASTER MAID:

Drop of water, bless my soul.
Fill the sea and stop the troll.

NARRATOR 4:  She poured overboard a single drop, and the drop of water filled the sea.

TROLL:  *(raging at the Water Sucker)* Drink it up! Drink it up!

NARRATOR 2:  But not another drop could the Water Sucker drink,

NARRATOR 3:  and Leif and Master Maid landed safe on the other shore.

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NARRATOR 1:  It wasn’t long then till Leif had Master Maid home, and not long again till they had a wedding.

NARRATOR 4:  But when the minister asked Master Maid if she’d love, honor, and obey, Leif told him,

LEIF:  Never mind that! It’s best if *I* obey *her.*

NARRATOR 2:  And he did—

NARRATOR 3:  which is *why* they lived happily ever after.