Sally's Story by H, B. Lloyd

Ouat, a village on the Oregon Coast, was the home of Sally, a young girl who lived alone in a small cabin overlooking the sea. The cold winds blew and the rains flew almost all of the time in Ouat. Sally was always cold and wet, it seemed. Her cabin had a quite serviceable wood stove, but she never seemed to have enough dry wood to burn.

She would wander the beach and collect driftwood, and stack it around her cabin, but the rain would keep it damp and her cabin was drafty and she

just couldn't seem to keep warm. Now, young Sally was an artist and she would draw pictures of the sea and the forest surrounding her cabin. One day she was drawing in the forest, when she saw a small figure asleep under a huge forest fungus. He appeared to be an elf or a gnome or something. He looked no more than 3 ft tall with cork boots and canvas pants, held up by bright red suspenders and a green and brown plaid wool shirt. He wore a shapeless black hat over his long hair which joined his graying beard to surround his peacefully snoring face. Beside him lay a small, but serviceable looking, double-bladed ax. She decided to sketch the little person, and had just finished her drawing when a rain squall started. The rain, combined with Sally's sigh of dismay, woke him.

"Oh, what,... Oh, this will never do, oh,... no." He sputtered.

"I'm sorry, I didn't mean to wake you, but it is raining. I have a cabin near if you'd like to try to stay dry, though I have very little warmth to offer there." Sally said.

"Oh, I couldn't, no, I must. . .", and the rain became heavier and Sally started back home.

"I'm going and you're welcome but I must get out of the rain", she said over her shoulder as she dashed through to woods toward her cabin.

When she reached home, she found a few pieces of cedar, and several dry sticks of driftwood, and built a small fire in the stove. "What a strange person," she thought, "so small and asleep in the forest. I wonder where he lives, what he does, I hope he isn't going to get wet and cold and catch his death in this rain." The rain was now coming down seriously and looked like it would last for quite a while. She put her sketch book on her desk with her other drawings and looked around her little cabin.

The walls were covered with sketches and paintings, and the ceiling was hung with mobiles, some finished, some works in progress. The aforementioned wood stove sat in the middle of the small room, with a patina of rust and soot on its front and top. The small fire crackled but had yet to warm beyond the walls of the stove when she heard a tentative knock at the door.

"Come in." She spoke quietly and a little

The small person opened the door a crack, and peeked in. He had his ax over his shoulder and seemed to have composed himself since their last meeting.

"My name is Billybong," he said, as he entered, looked around and rested his ax by the threshold.

"Oh, my, you draw," he said. "Is that what you were doing when I woke up?"
"Yes," Sally said, "Do you want to see?"
"NO!" he shouted. "Oh, No!"

"What is it?" Sally asked.

"Well," he seemed to deflate, to lose what little height he possessed, to became smaller, and older, and tired, very tired.

"Well, I had a tough day, the weather has been, you know, you live here, tough. And, well, I'm damned old, so I took a nap. And what are you doing living out here and drawing pictures of people without their permission?!" His cheeks flushed.

"Excuse me!?", Sally said, "I draw! You are no different from the trees to me, I offered you shelter from the rain, who are you to talk like that?"

"Not much shelter or warmth," he said coming

nearer to the stove.

She looked over at the stove, not much indeed was coming from it.

"Well, the wood is wet and. . . what, Mr.

Billybong are you doing in these woods?" He looked at her, and his eyes seemed to plead for an understanding that he feared to hope for.

"I am a logger gnome." It seemed difficult for him to say. "There are few of us left, we used to work with the old people who lived here before the new people came. Our job is to help the forest and the people who live in it. We watch the young trees as well as the old ones. We find young trees that come from trees we know to be strong and we help them if need be. We cut some trees that have died. If there is a nest in the branches or a den in the roots, of course, we leave them alone, but if they are old snags, with little nourishment to give to the young trees, we cut them, and they warm the people in the cold wet times.

"Oh, my," Sally said. "Are you very old?" "We, my people, planted the Redwoods, " he said, with some pride.

She looked at him again, this time with a wonder

that she had seldom felt before.

"Can I get you some chamomile tea or perhaps some thing to eat?" she asked. "No!" he spoke harshly, and again tried to

compose himself. "You drew an image of me?"
"Yes," Sally said, "don't you want to l∞k at it?" She turned toward her desk to fetch the sketch pad.

"No!" he bellowed. "You don't understand. We, ... logger gnomes, are what you call, well, ... shy? If someone has an image of one of us, they, well, have a control, or at least can influence one, ... to do things, . . . things one may or may not want to

do. The old people respected us and never made likenesses of us, even though, like you," he said, looking around the room at the pictures and sketches, "they were very talented."

Sally looked at the wet little person, and smiled.

"Thank you," she said.

"You're welcome," Billybong muttered, "but we do have a problem. You see, if you keep my image, your drawing, I will never be secure, I will never be safe, that image is me! If you understand?"

Sally's eyes sparkled; though she was young, barely old enough to live by herself after her family was gone, she had learned the ways of the forest and the seas; she had watched the crows and the seagulls, the elk and the bears, the whales and the salmon.

"So, you want my drawing?" she said. "Well, that is what I do, you see. I draw. You, and yours tend to the forest, but I tend to the images."

Billybong smiled.

"You seem to be older than you look," he said. "Oh, yes," Sally said, "and it seems that I have something you value. What will you give me for the

"I regret to tell you," Billybong said, "that I have nothing but my ax by the door and what strength is left in this old body to offer. You have the only image ever made of a logger gnome, and I am full of shame, because it is an image of me. I am old and weak. Please, give it to me," he pleaded.
"No," she said, softly. "No, I have my needs as

well. You seem strong enough. And your ax looks sharp enough," she said, looking toward the door.

It did look to have a good edge, and the shiny blade was decorated with what looked like old Northwest Indian designs. The handle was also very curious, it was a dark wood that had been carved at the end to look like a cresting wave, and though it had obviously been well cured and used, there appeared to be a small branch with a living leaf growing near the blade.

"I live here alone," she spoke matter of factly, "I am young and my cabin is cold and damp and I can't gather enough dry wood to keep me warm. If you will supply me with the wood I need, until I am warm and comfortable, I will give you my drawing."

Billybong looked her straight in the eye, and she

"Very well," he said, and turned on his heel, grabbed his ax and was out the door before she could say another word.

True to his word, Billybong began to bring wood to the cabin, and stack it outside under the eves. It was old, dry, aromatic wood. Just to smell it made you think of the years that the trees had lived, the storms they had seen, the fires they had survived, the quiet times in the forest, and things that people just didn't have words for. And when Sally would put the wood in the old stove, it would leap into flame, crackle and pop, and warm her to her soul.

After a fortnight the wood had stacked up around the cabin; you could barely see the cabin for the wood. All of this time Sally had never seen Billybong, he would apparently wait until Sally was on the beach, or in the forest, drawing, before he would bring the wood and stack it. One afternoon Billybong appeared as Sally was making tea, prior to her usual stroll on the beach to watch the sunset.

"May I have the image now?" Billybong asked; he

spoke from the shelter of the trees. "Oh," Sally said, startled by his sudden manifestation, "Well. . . it is nice to have enough wood to last for a while, but you see, what I had in

mind is enough to never have to worry about being cold and damp again. Ever." Billybong came closer and again looked her in the

eye, and this time she blinked. "Ever?" he said. "What is wrong with you new people? Nothing is ever ever! All things change, all of the time! Do you want me to cut every tree in the forest so that you can be warm? I think you need to

find another way to warm yourself!" Sally looked back at him and suddenly turned and ran into her cabin. She snatched the drawing and brought it out to Billybong.

He smiled and winked and disappeared into the

That evening, as she walked on the beach, she met a young man, he was gentle, he was quiet, and he smiled. She invited him to her cabin, and she built a fire in the old stove, and they were warm, and they drank tea, and talked about life, and she showed him her drawings and they fell in love. She never saw the logger gnome again, and she never showed the young man the drawing she had made of the gnome's ax. Eventually, she left her cabin, and her forest and her beach, and went to live with the young man in a small village down the coast. . . called Hea.

(If you look on the right map, you might find that Ouat is short for Once upon a time and that Hea is short for Happily ever after, and then, perhaps, you will understand that fairy tales can happen anywhere, anytime, even now, and even on the Oregon Coast.)

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Now the trick is to work them into a conversation.