

# A GIRL OF THE LIMBERLOST

By  
Marie Kohler

(In the dark, we hear various forest noises: wind in trees, bird twittering; over this, a violin playing; then a woman weeping mournfully.)

## ACT I Scene One

(The Comstock Cabin, around 1908, in Indiana's once immense Limberlost swamp.)

(We see ELNORA COMSTOCK, about fourteen, dressing for school in plain country clothes. In another room, we see her mother, KATE COMSTOCK, unsmiling, preparing her daughter's lunch, packing it in a tin pail.)

(ELNORA starts downstairs and out of the house, trying not to be noticed.)

KATE  
(noticing, but not looking at her daughter)

Elnora Comstock, have you lost your senses?

ELNORA  
(stopping) What do you mean, mother?

KATE  
No child of mine goes off to school looking like a play actress. You comb your hair and bind it down decent before you go.

(KATE hands ELNORA a ribbon to tie back her hair. ELNORA does so.)  
(Enter WESLEY SINTON)

What are you doing here? Doesn't an old swamp farmer like you have more to do on a Monday morning than visit us?

WESLEY  
I came to see Elnora off on her big day, Kate.

ELNORA  
Uncle Wesley, do I look all right?

WESLEY  
Look all right? Honey, there's nothing you could do to improve on that sweet face of yours!

KATE  
You'll make the child vain, Wesley.

(Kate goes for the pail.)

ELNORA  
(cautiously)

No, Uncle Wesley, I mean these clothes. Will they get by at a city high school?

WESLEY  
Well, you know, Elnora

(winking)

one of the reasons I came by today was to check you out for your Aunt Maggie - to see if you were dressed

right and proper.

KATE

Aren't calico and good working boots proper enough?

WESLEY

You let me finish now, Kate - I was also goin' to say, in fashion-like - you know styles have changed a lot since our day.

KATE

And more fools we if we change with them. What's good enough for the Limberlost is good enough for city high school. And if you don't know that by now, Wesley Sinton, you're a fool. Besides, I've got no money to buy anything.

WESLEY

Well, Margaret was wondering if we could help, that's all. You know she loves Elnora as if she were her own.

KATE

Well, she isn't.

(silence.)

ELNORA

Mother -

KATE

Maybe if she had her own, she'd understand what it's really like raisin' a child.

WESLEY

Kate -

KATE

I've had my share of burdens, and raisin' this child up without Robert is one of them.

WESLEY

But, Kate, that's why we'd like to --

(ELNORA tries to leave again)

Hold on, Elnora - you're forgetting your lunch pail.

ELNORA

(Finding an excuse)

Mother, I won't need anything to eat today.

(starts to exit)

KATE

You'll take your lunch or you'll not go one step. Walk almost three miles and no food from morning till night! And after I've gone and scrubbed up this pail and filled it special for your first day.

(ELNORA takes the conspicuous-looking pail.)

ELNORA

All right, Mother. Thank you. Goodbye.

(She exits.)

WESLEY

(calling after her)

Goodbye, Elnora! You couldn't have found a more stand-outish way for her to carry her lunch to school, could you, Kate.

KATE

I bet a dollar she gets enough of it by nightfall!

(Lights out)

### **Scene Two**

(A clearing in the Limberlost. We see ELNORA at her secret spot, a place in the forest floor where she has a hidden box.)

(ELNORA checks to see whether she's being watched, leans down, removes leaves and opens the box. She lifts out a frame of glass-mounted butterflies and a framed luna moth and looks at them, as if for inspiration.)

ELNORA

(on her knees, her eyes closed)

Now, in the name of all things good and beautiful, hide me under the shadow of thy wings. Hide me, please hide me under the shadows of thy wings.

(In a rush, ELNORA replaces the frames and starts to leave. Remembering her pail, she stashes it, wraps some food in a napkin and stuffs it in her pocket. She undoes the ribbon and shakes out her hair, full and beautiful.)

(ELNORA exits.)