

## The One Great Gnome

**Jeff Dinardo**

**Jhon Ortiz, Illustrator**

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A lonely eleven-year-old discovers a secret underworld filled with gnomes and trolls in Jeff Dinardo's quirky fantasy tale, *The One Great Gnome*.

The day after she and her parents move from New York City to rural Connecticut, Sarah finds a stone gnome in their potting shed. But it isn't a statue. As she returns the miniature sword to his hilt, the gnome comes alive, telling her he's been sent to the surface from the underground land of Oglinoth to search for a way to beat the trolls who have taken over the gnome kingdom.

Like Alice falling into Wonderland, Sarah follows the gnome, Vesper, through a tiny door and discovers a world beneath her feet. She promises to help Vesper save the gnomes, but the more she learns about Oglinoth, the more she realizes that the trolls may have a different motive.

Sarah's friendly nature endears her to others right away. She empathizes with each gnome, troll, and human she comes across. Her joyful and curious disposition helps as her new, eccentric friends sweep her into their years-long conflict, in which she becomes an understanding intermediary. Vesper and the other gnomes, as well as the trolls, speak as if their rivalry exists because it always has, and it's hard for them to hear anything different until they listen to Sarah's outsider perspective.

Whimsical events become layered and humorous because of the story's straightforward narration, including nonsensical actions and quaint traditions, and its quirky illustrations are a complementary feature. With tributes to imaginative children's classics embedded in it, *The One Great Gnome* is an endlessly fun middle grade adventure.

AIMEE JODIN (September / October 2020)

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