

Two Boys Who Outwitted a Lake Troll

By Lise Lunge Larsen

2. Once upon a time, there were two boys named Gunvald and Torvald (Gunny and Tor) who lived in the small fishing village of Knife River. They were the oldest in their families, and as they were very poor, they often had to go fishing in Lake Superior to provide food.

As they began the walk to their fishing camp, the boys discovered their net was full of holes! Oh No! Looking for help, they stopped at the hut of their Huldrefolk friend, the Keeper of the Forest.

The gentle Keeper said, "Row along the shores of the Enchanted Forest until you see Red Pillars. That's where the Dwarf lives. Dwarves will repair tools for those who are kind to them so maybe the Dwarf will help repair your net. And remember, keep an eye out for the wicked Lake Troll."

"Thank you, Keeper," said the boys.

3. Passing under the net archway into the Enchanted Forest, Gunny and Tor continued on to their fishing camp. Here, they jumped into their skiff and rowed it northeast, hugging the Lake Superior shoreline until they saw towering Red Pillars hidden amongst spruce and balsam trees.

4. Gunny and Tor landed their skiff in front of the Red Pillars, beat on the Dwarf's drum and waited.

The Dwarf's house rose out of the ground and he came to the door in a tall red cap. He was cranky but when they kindly asked him to repair their net, he vanished, returning in a flash with a net that looked next to new!

"Here you go," said the grouchy but helpful Dwarf.

Expressing their gratitude, the boys clambered back into their skiff and rowed out past Knife Island to set their net.

5. As the boys rowed out to the fishing waters they wondered if the Lake Troll was watching them.

Gunny turned to Tor and said, "You know, like all trolls, the Lake Troll will burst and turn to stone if the sun shines on him. I've heard the Lake Troll can create dense mist and fog and blow it out over the water and shore. Then he can safely wade into the lake and steal nets full of fish."

Tor murmured, "I think we'd better be careful."

6. The boys had hardly put their net into the water when all at once an enormous school of herring swam right into it.

"Wow! We have so many fish!" exclaimed Gunny.

"When we sell this catch at the markets in Duluth we'll be rich. We might get enough money to last the whole winter!"

"Enough to buy presents for everyone!" added Tor.

"Could someone be helping us today?" wondered Gunny.

"Maybe. Let's hope the Lake Troll doesn't get wind of this," said Tor worriedly. "He might steal our fish. We'd better hurry."

As the boys pulled in their loaded net, they heard soft echoes of music and bells all around them.

7. "Did you help us today?" they asked the Elves as they passed their grove.

"Yes, we sang a special charm to guide the fish into your nets," said one of the Elves. "Did it work?"

"Thank you! We have so many herring we almost couldn't carry our net. And now we must get our fish ready for market before the Lake Troll finds out."

"Bring your catch to the Hillfolk" said the Elf. "They will help you. But mind the Lake Troll doesn't see you. And take one of these bells. Trolls can't stand the sound of

ringing bells."

"Takk (which means Thank You in Norwegian)," said the grateful boys.

8. With their catch of herring filling the bottom of their boat, the grateful brothers rowed back past Knife Island where they saw a bald eagle perched in a tree peering down at them. They wondered if the Lake Troll was watching them too.

"I've heard that Knife Island is really one of the Lake Troll's brothers," said Gunny. "When he wandered too far out into the sun, he turned to stone and is now lying as a pile of rocks right under that eagle's tree!"

"I don't see any troll mist or fog out there but we'd better be careful," said Tor as they rowed along the shore to the Hillfolk Forest.

9. Gunny and Tor carried their herring catch up the shore close to the Hillfolk Farm where the Hillfolk helped them pick their net.

10. The boys thanked the Hillfolk. Just as they were leaving, they heard a loud bellowing sound. The Lake Troll was creeping up the riverbank!

11. The Lake Troll was a huge and terrible creature who lived in a cave by the shore of Lake Superior.

Today he had waded up Knife River looking for fish. His head was covered with clumps of seaweed and leeches. His giant hands and feet were webbed. He had a long tail that whipped out behind him.

12. Now the hulking Troll set off after Gunny and Tor! Eeeek!

The boys dashed in and out of the trees along Knife River Ridge. "You can steal our fish in the water but you can't catch us on land," they teased.

13. "I WILL catch you!" roared the Lake Troll and chased after them. But as he ran, his long tail swished back and forth and suddenly it snagged on a tree and the troll fell flat on his face.

"You're no match for us in the forest," yelled Gunny triumphantly as he rang his bell. But covering his ears, the awkward Lake Troll untangled himself and got up again.

14. "I'm going to blow my mist on you so you can't see where you're going. Then I'll be the only one who can see. I'll catch both you AND the fish!" shouted the Troll.

"Birch Fairy, help us!" yelled Tor as the boys came to her tree.

But only the Wood Nymphs and Flower Fairies were in the birch tree dancing in the wind. "She WILL help you but keep on running!" they said. So the boys ran by with the Troll stumbling clumsily behind them.

15. The Birch Fairy had flown on ahead!

Before the angry troll could find the boys and send out his mist, the magical Birch Fairy flew up to the tops of the trees, grabbed the branches, and pulled them aside so the sun shone directly on the Lake Troll.

16. With a tremendous explosion, the Troll fell onto his side, burst apart, and turned into a huge pile of rocks. Gunny, Tor and their herring were safe!

After thanking all the Huldrefolk who had helped them, the boys packed up their fish boxes and traveled to Duluth where they earned so much money they had enough for the rest of the year.

And with the terrible Lake Troll gone, they caught enough fish to keep them comfortable for the rest of their days.

Lise Lunge Larsen is a special friend of Knife River helping us find traces of hidden folk along the Huldrefolk Trail. Born and raised in Norway, Lise is a professional storyteller and has written award winning books.