

# *The Terrible Olli: The Story of an Honest Finn and a Wicked Troll*

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Finnish

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*Easy*

*14 min read*

here was once a wicked rich old Troll who lived on a Mountain that sloped down to a Bay. A decent Finn, a farmer, lived on the opposite side of the Bay. The farmer had three sons. When the boys had reached manhood he said to them one day:

“I should think it would shame you three strong youths that that wicked old Troll over there should live on year after year and no one trouble him. We work hard like honest Finns and are as poor at the end of the year as at the beginning. That old Troll with all his wickedness grows richer and richer. I tell you, if you boys had any real spirit you’d take his riches from him and drive him away!”

His youngest son, whose name was Olli, at once cried out:

“Very well, father, I will!”

But the two older sons, offended at Olli’s promptness, declared:

“You’ll do no such thing! Don’t forget your place in the family! You’re the youngest and we’re not going to let you push us aside. Now, father, we two will go across the Bay and rout out that old Troll. Olli may come with us if he likes and watch us while we do it.”

Olli laughed and said: “All right!” for he was used to his brothers treating him like a baby.

So in a few days the three brothers walked around the Bay and up the Mountain and presented themselves at the Troll’s house. The Troll and his old wife were both at home. They received the brothers with great civility.

“You’re the sons of the Finn who lives across the Bay, aren’t you?” the Troll said. “I’ve watched you boys grow up. I am certainly glad to see you for I have three daughters who need husbands. Marry my daughters and you’ll inherit my riches.”

The old Troll made this offer in order to get the young men into his power.

“Be careful!” Olli whispered.

But the brothers were too delighted at the prospect of inheriting the Troll’s riches so easily to pay any heed to Olli’s warning. Instead they accepted the Troll’s offer at once.

Well, the old Troll’s wife made them a fine supper and after supper the Troll sent them to bed with his three daughters. But first he put red caps on the three youths and white caps on the three Troll girls. He made a joke about the caps.

“A red cap and a white cap in each bed!” he said.

The older brothers suspected nothing and soon fell asleep. Olli, too, pretended to fall asleep and when he was sure that none of the Troll girls were still awake he got up and quietly changed the caps. He put the white caps on himself and his brothers and the red caps on the Troll girls. Then he crept back to bed and waited.

Presently the old Troll came over to the beds with a long knife in his hand. There was so little light in the room that he couldn’t see the faces of the sleepers, but it was easy enough to distinguish the white caps from the red caps. With three swift blows he cut off the heads under the red caps, thinking of course they were the heads of the three Finnish youths. Then he went back to bed with the old Troll wife and Olli could hear them both

chuckling and laughing. After a time they went soundly to sleep as Olli could tell from their deep regular breathing and their loud snores.

Olli now roused his brothers and told them what had happened and the three of them slipped quietly out of the Troll house and hurried home to their father on the other side of the Bay.

After that the older brothers no longer talked of despoiling the Troll. They didn't care to try another encounter with him.

"He might have cut our heads off!" they said, shuddering to think of the awful risk they had run.

Olli laughed at them.

"Come on!" he kept saying to them day after day. "Let's go across the Bay to the Troll's!"

"We'll do no such thing!" they told him. "And you wouldn't suggest it either if you weren't so young and foolish!"

"Well," Olli announced at last, "if you won't come with me I'm going alone. I've heard that the Troll has a horse with hairs of gold and silver. I've decided I want that horse."

"Olli," his father said, "I don't believe you ought to go. You know what your brothers say. That old Troll is an awfully sly one!"

But Olli only laughed.

"Good-by!" he called back as he waved his hand. "When you see me again I'll be riding the Troll's horse!"

The Troll wasn't at home but the old Troll wife was there. When she saw Olli she thought to herself:

"Mercy me, here's that Finnish boy again, the one that changed the caps! What shall I do? I must keep him here on some pretext or other until the Troll comes home!"

So she pretended to be very glad to see him.

"Why, Olli," she said, "is that you? Come right in!"

She talked to him as long as she could and when she could think of nothing more to say she asked him would he

take the horse and water it at the Lake.

“That will keep him busy,” she thought to herself, “and long before he gets back from the Lake the Troll will be here.”

But Olli, instead of leading the horse down to the Lake, jumped on its back and galloped away. By the time the Troll reached home, he was safely on the other side of the Bay.

When the Troll heard from the old Troll wife what had happened, he went down to the shore and halloed across the Bay:

“Olli! Oh, Olli, are you there?”

Olli made a trumpet of his hands and called back:

“Yes, I’m here! What do you want?”

“Olli, have you got my horse?”

“Yes, I’ve got your horse but it’s my horse now!”

“Olli! Olli!” his father cried. “You mustn’t talk that way to the Troll! You’ll make him angry!”

And his brothers looking with envy at the horse with gold and silver hairs warned him sourly:

“You better be careful, young man, or the Troll will get you yet!”

A few days later Olli announced:

“I think I’ll go over and get the Troll’s money-bag.”

His father tried to dissuade him.

“Don’t be foolhardy, Olli! Your brothers say you had better not go to the Troll’s house again.”

But Olli only laughed and started gaily off as though he hadn’t a fear in the world.

Again he found the old Troll wife alone.

“Mercy me!” she thought to herself as she saw him coming, “here is that terrible Olli again! Whatever shall I do? I mustn’t let him off this time before the Troll gets back! I must keep him right here with me in the house.”

So when he came in she pretended that she was tired and that her back ached and she asked him would he watch the bread in the oven while she rested a few moments on the bed.

“Certainly I will,” Olli said.

So the old Troll wife lay down on the bed and Olli sat quietly in front of the oven. The Troll wife really was tired and before she knew it she fell asleep.

“Ha!” thought Olli, “here’s my chance!”

Without disturbing the Troll wife he reached under the bed, pulled out the big money-bag full of silver pieces, threw it over his shoulder, and hurried home.

He was measuring the money when he heard the Troll hallooing across to him:

“Olli! Oh, Olli, are you there?”

“Yes,” Olli shouted back, “I’m here! What do you want?”

“Olli, have you got my money-bag?”

“Yes, I’ve got your money-bag but it’s my money-bag now!”

A few days later Olli said:

“Do you know, the Troll has a beautiful coverlet woven of silk and gold. I think I’ll go over and get it.”

His father as usual protested but Olli laughed at him merrily and went. He took with him an auger and a can of water. He hid until it was dark, then climbed the roof of the Troll’s house and bored a hole right over the bed.

When the Troll and his wife went to sleep he sprinkled some water on the coverlet and on their faces.

The Troll woke with a start.

“I’m wet!” he said, “and the bed’s wet, too!”

The old Troll wife got up to change the covers.

“The roof must be leaking,” she said. “It never leaked before. I suppose it was that last wind.”

She threw the wet coverlet up over the rafters to dry and put other covers on the bed.

When she and the Troll were again asleep, Olli made the hole a little bigger, reached in his hand, and got the coverlet from the rafters.

The next morning the Troll hallooed across the Bay:

“Olli! Oh, Olli, are you there?”

“Yes,” Olli shouted back, “I’m here! What do you want?”

“Have you got my coverlet woven of silk and gold?”

“Yes,” Olli told him, “I’ve got your coverlet but it’s my coverlet now!”

A few days later Olli said:

“There’s still one thing in the Troll’s house that I think I ought to get. It’s a golden bell. If I get that golden bell then there will be nothing left that had better belong to an honest Finn.”

So he went again to the Troll’s house taking with him a saw and an auger. He hid until night and, when the Troll and his wife were asleep, he cut a hole through the side of the house through which he reached in his hand to get the bell. At the touch of his hand the bell tinkled and woke the Troll. The Troll jumped out of bed and grabbed Olli’s hand.

“Ha! Ha!” he cried. “I’ve got you now and this time you won’t get away!”

Olli didn't try to get away. He made no resistance while the Troll dragged him into the house.

"We'll eat him—that's what we'll do!" the Troll said to his wife. "Heat the oven at once and we'll roast him!"

So the Troll wife built a roaring fire in the oven.

"He'll make a fine roast!" the Troll said, pinching Olli's arms and legs. "I think we ought to invite the other Troll folk to come and help us eat him up. Suppose I just go over the Mountain and gather them in. You can manage here without me. As soon as the oven is well heated just take Olli and slip him in and close the door and by the time we come he'll be done."

"Very well," the Troll wife said, "but don't be too long! He's young and tender and will roast quickly!"

So the Troll went out to invite to the feast the Troll folk who lived on the other side of the Mountain and Olli was left alone with the Troll wife.

When the oven was well heated she raked out the coals and said to Olli:

"Now then, my boy, sit down in front of the oven with your back to the opening and I'll push you in nicely."

Olli pretended he didn't quite understand. He sat down first one way and then another, spreading himself out so large that he was too big for the oven door.

"Not that way!" the Troll wife kept saying. "Hunch up little, straight in front of the door!"

"You show me how," Olli begged.

So the old Troll wife sat down before the oven directly in front of the opening, and she hunched herself up very compactly with her chin on her knees and her arms around her legs.

"Oh, that way!" Olli said, "so that you can just take hold of me and push me in and shut the door!"

And as he spoke he took hold of her and pushed her in and slammed the door! And that was the end of the old Troll wife!

Olli let her roast in the oven until she was done to a turn. Then he took her out and put her on the table all ready

for the feast.

Then he filled a sack with straw and dressed the sack up in some of the old Troll wife's clothes. He threw the dressed up sack on the bed and, just to glance at it, you'd suppose it was the Troll wife asleep.

Then Olli took the golden bell and went home.

Well, presently the Troll and all the Troll folk from over the Mountain came trooping in.

"Yum! Yum! It certainly smells good!" they said as they got the first whiff from the big roast on the table.

"See!" the Troll said, pointing to the bed. "The old woman's asleep! Well, let her sleep! She's tired! We'll just sit down without her!"

So they set to and feasted and feasted.

"Ha! Ha!" said the Troll. "This is the way to serve a troublesome young Finn!"

Just then his knife struck something hard and he looked down to see what it was.

"Mercy me!" he cried, "if here isn't one of the old woman's beads! What can that mean? You don't suppose the roast is not Olli after all but the old woman! No! No! It can't be!"

He got up and went over to the bed. Then he came back shaking his head sadly.

"My friends," he said, "we've been eating the old woman! However, we've eaten so much of her that I suppose we might as well finish her!"

So the Troll folk sat all night feasting and drinking.

At dawn the Troll went down to the water and hallooed across:

"Olli! Oh, Olli, are you there?"

Olli who was safely home shouted back:

“Yes, I’m here! What do you want?”

“Have you got my golden bell?”

“Yes, I’ve got your golden bell but it’s my golden bell now!”

“One thing more, Olli: did you roast my old woman?”

“Your old woman?” Olli echoed. “Look! Is that she?”

Olli pointed at the rising sun which was coming up behind the Troll.

The Troll turned and looked. He looked straight at the sun and then, of course, he burst!

So that was the end of him!

Well, after that no other Troll ever dared settle on that side of the Mountain. They were all too afraid of the Terrible Olli!

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