

## **The Project Gutenberg eBook of Baartock, by Lewis Roth**

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\*\*\* START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK BAARTOCK \*\*\*

Here is a short message from the author of Baartock:

This book is directed at children, up to about third grade, though it should be read to them by an adult.

Baartock, by Lewis Roth (C)1989

# **BAARTOCK**

**by Lewis Roth**

## **Chapter 1**

Baartock was sitting by the side of the old two lane country road, crying. Seven years old and all alone for hours, but that wasn't why he was sobbing, tears running down his cheeks. He had grown up in the forest, he was used to being alone, except for his parents. He wasn't lost and he hadn't run away from home, though he felt so ashamed he didn't want to go home. It had been a bad day, a terrible day. Baartock had been waiting all day to scare someone, but there hadn't been anyone to scare. It was such a bad thing to happen to a troll on his first day.

Today was such an important day. Today was the very first day that Baartock was to go out scaring all by himself. He had stayed up late the night before and had gotten up early, so he would be all tired and cranky. He had gone out of the cave where he lived and rolled in the smelliest, nastiest mud he could find, so he would look his scariest. And he had practiced his screams and shrieks, until both his parents yelled at him to shut-up and to go scare somebody. He had set out, going down the old dry stream-bed, just like his father had told him. On the way, he fell down and cut his knee, which made him really angry. He threw a rock at a bird that was singing in the trees, trying to make fun of him. He missed and that made him even angrier. When he got to the road and looked both ways, he crossed it and hid in the culvert. Then he waited and listened.

The culvert wasn't much of a bridge. It was just a big, old concrete pipe that went under the road for rain-water to go through. He wished that it was a bridge, any kind of bridge at all. Even a wooden bridge, but a real bridge that he could hide under and come rushing out to scare people. He crouched down to wait and listen.

He knew what he was listening for. The sound of someone walking down the road. Baartock had practiced at home, just the way his father had shown him. He would stand waiting, just out of sight. Then, when he heard something, he would run up the hill, roaring and screaming. The practice had all gone so well. When he did it at home, he never had to wait long to hear something. He had scared lots of squirrels, a deer, two opossum, and a skunk. Baartock didn't like to remember the skunk. They had scared each other.

To help pass the time, Baartock remembered of some of the stories that his father told. Stories about the famous trolls in his family, and how they had scared people. How his Great-

great-uncle Ssssgnaarl had chased a whole village. He had come running down the side of the mountain and right into the village, yelling and screaming his loudest, and everybody had run away. And how wonderfully ugly his mother's grandfather Munchch-Crunchch had been. So ugly, that just as soon as he looked up over the side of a bridge, people would faint right where they were standing. It was fun to think about things like that, while he was waiting.

He thought about the name he was going to earn for himself. Something really scary and wonderful. Baartock wasn't his real name. That was just what his mother called him. His father would just

yell 'kid', and Baartock knew that meant him. That's the way it is with trolls. But he wouldn't get a name, a real troll name until he was twelve years old, and had scared lots of people. He wanted to earn a really scary name like Arrrggrr-Munch Slinurp, which was his father's name.

He waited for a long time, but no one came. After a while, when he got tired, he ate his sandwiches. They were really good. His mother had put extra sand in them. Just as he finished his lunch, a bee stung him. That got him angry again, and he felt that he could scare anybody who came along. He settled down again to wait and listen. But he didn't hear anything. He kept waiting. When he got tired of waiting down under the road in the culvert, he climbed up and hid in a bush by the side of the road. Baartock waited some more, but still nobody came walking down the road. The sun was right overhead. He was hot and tired and hungry and lots of things, but mostly unhappy. The longer he waited, the unhappier he got.

He was sitting by the side of the road, crying, when the car drove up and stopped near him. He was sobbing so hard that he didn't hear it. It wouldn't have mattered if he had heard it. His father hadn't shown him how to scare a car. He did hear the car door slam, when Mr. Fennis got out.

"What's the matter?" Mr. Fennis didn't know anything about trolls, but he knew about children. And what he saw was a very dirty little child sitting by the side of the road, crying. Mr. Fennis taught third grade and would have been at school, but this morning he had to go to the dentist. He was hurrying to get back to school. He didn't want to miss more than half the day. The substitute teacher had been sick and Mrs. Jackson, the principal, was teaching his class. That was almost as bad as the pain in his mouth.

As soon as Baartock saw Mr. Fennis, he knew what he was supposed to do. If he hadn't been sobbing so hard, he might have been able to scare him.

"Ahgrr," Baartock started to yell, but it got all mixed up with his crying and didn't come out scary at all.

"What's the matter?" Mr. Fennis asked again. "Are you hurt?"

Baartock could only shake his head.

"Are you lost? What's wrong?"

Baartock tried to say, "I'm trying to scare you," but all that came out was "scare."

"You don't have to be scared. I'll try to help you. Do you know how to get home?"

Baartock nodded his head and sobbed some more. He hadn't been able to scare this person. Now they were even talking. Oh, this was awful.

"Let me take you home," said Mr. Fennis. "Which way do you live?"

Baartock pointed up the hill. "I don't think anyone lives up there. You must live in the old Howard place." Mr. Fennis seemed to be talking mostly to himself. Then he asked "How old are you?"

"Seven," answered Baartock.

"You should be in school today."

"No school." Baartock didn't know what school was, but he didn't think he should be there. "Father said 'wait here'. I came early today, but nobody came."

"You've been waiting for a school bus all this time?" Mr. Fennis knew what the trouble was now. The poor kid. Missed the bus, and he's been sitting here ever since. No wonder he was crying. Though he could have gone back home and gotten cleaned up. I'd better take him home and explain things to his mother.

"What's your name?"

"Don't have name," Baartock was feeling a little better. Just sobbing every now and then.

"Well then, what can I call you?" asked Mr. Fennis. After all, he was a teacher and he knew how to get an answer.

"Baartock. Mother calls me Baartock."

"All right, Baartock. You can call me, Mr. Fennis. I teach third grade at the school where you should be today. I'm going to take you home." Then he had a thought. No point in driving back to the old Howard house if no one would be there. So many mothers had jobs. Besides, he was in a hurry to get back to school. "Is your mother home now?" he asked.

"No." Baartock knew that his mother would be out gathering poison ivy and catching lizards for dinner.

"Well, Baartock. You should be in school and I'm going there. You can ride there with me and come home on the school bus." Taking Baartock's hand, they walked to the car.

For some trollish reason, Baartock's mother hadn't told him not to talk with strangers, or not to go anywhere with them. Maybe it was because she didn't think that he would ever get the chance. But, Baartock knew that he was supposed to be scaring someone, not talking to them. Or going in a car with them.

Because he had stayed up in the woods until today, Baartock had never seen a car. He didn't know a car was, or what it looked like. He certainly had never ridden in one, but he liked this thing they got into. Mr. Fennis was neat about most things, but his car was a mess. The paint was scratched, one of the fenders was dented, and on the floor were some paper coffee cups and soda cans. On the back seat were seven over-due library books, an overflowing litter bag, a couple of cans of oil, which should have been in the trunk, and some plastic tubing for a science project. To Baartock, it looked just like home. He was busy looking around when Mr. Fennis started the engine and began to drive off. Then Baartock went wild and really did scare Mr. Fennis.

## Chapter 2

It was only a short drive, though it felt very long to both Baartock and Mr. Fennis. When Mr. Fennis finally parked the car at Marvis T. Johnson Elementary School, he got out and helped Baartock out of the back seat.

"I'm sorry I yelled at you, Baartock," apologized Mr. Fennis, helping him out. "You almost made us crash when you grabbed the steering wheel. You don't do that in your folks car, do you?"

"Don't like!" said Baartock angrily, as he kicked at the side of the car.

"Don't do that! It's my car. It may not look pretty, but it's paid for and takes me where I want to go."

"Go home," said Baartock and he started to walk off the way they had come. Like all trolls, he had an almost perfect sense of direction and couldn't get lost. This place wasn't at all like the woods and he didn't like it. It was all new and frightening to him. Since he was a troll, he wasn't going to be scared, or not much anyway. He was supposed to do the scaring.

"Come on, Baartock. Let's go on into school." Mr. Fennis grabbed Baartock's hand.

"Don't want school! Want to go home!"

So, with Mr. Fennis pulling one way and Baartock pulling the other, they went into school. As soon as they got inside, Baartock stopped wanting to go home and started looking at this new kind of cave he was in. There were big boards fastened to the walls, covered with lots of colored papers. There were cases with glass frames with more colored papers behind them. The walls were a bright yellow, and there were lights overhead. Even the floor was smooth and shiny. There were a lot of new things for him to see. He was still looking around when they got to the school office.

"Ms. Laurence, Baartock seems to have missed the bus this morning," said Mr. Fennis to the woman sitting at a desk, behind the counter. Ms. Laurence was the school secretary. "I found him still waiting by the road."

"Baartock? I don't know any Baartock."

"Well, he's seven, so he must be in Mrs. Stogbuchner's class. Could you get him down there? I've really got to get back to my class. Good-by, Baartock." With that, Mr. Fennis hurried out of the office and down the hall, leaving Baartock in the office.

Baartock looked at Ms. Laurence. Then he looked all around the room. When he had seen enough he said, "Not Mississtog-Buchnersklass. Go home! Now!" Baartock thought it might be fun to meet someone with a wonderfully scary name like Mississtog-Buchnersklass, but he was tired and wanted to go home. He was just out the door, leaving Ms. Laurence calling "Baartock!"

Stop!" when he crashed right into Mrs. Jackson, the principal.

Mr. Fennis told Mrs. Jackson about Baartock just as soon as he had gotten into his classroom and she came running to the office. Mrs. Jackson had been a school teacher for many years and principal for a few more, but she wasn't sure that she had ever seen a child quite like the dirty, wild, little one, who was trying to pull away from her. "Stop right now!" Mrs. Jackson's voice echoed up and down the hall. Baartock stopped squirming and stood, wide-eyed, staring at her. He didn't know humans could sound like that. Down the hall, classroom doors opened and several teachers looked out. Mrs. Jackson ignored them as she pushed Baartock back into the office and closed the door.

"Please tell me your name." Before he could say that he wasn't old enough to have a name, Ms. Laurence answered "Baartock."

"Baartock," said Mrs. Jackson as she brought him over to a bench, "sit down. Tell me how you got so dirty."

"Rolled in mud. Want to go home."

"You certainly must have rolled in the mud. I understand you missed your bus this morning."

"Mrs. Jackson," said Ms. Laurence, who had stopped watching them and was busily looking through some papers, "We don't have any student named Baartock." School had just started the week before, but Ms. Laurence was sure that she knew the names of all the new students. And where to find their records.

"Is today your first day?" asked Mrs. Jackson. "Yes! First day! First day!" Baartock answered right away. Finally he had found someone who understood that today was his first day to go scare people by all himself.

"But, Mrs. Jackson, I don't have his registration forms, medical records, or anything." Ms. Laurence was now going through file drawers.

"I'm sure you'll find them. Baartock and I will just go down to Mrs. Stogbuchner's class, then I'll be back to help you look," said Mrs. Jackson as she opened the door. "Baartock, let's go meet your teacher. I'm sure you'll be very happy in her class."

"Want to go home!" repeated Baartock rather loudly as they walked down the hall.

"Please don't shout, Baartock. We don't want to disturb the other classes. I'm sure you would like to go home. I would like to go home, too, but we're supposed to be here. And we'll get everything straightened out about your bus schedule, so you won't miss your bus tomorrow. I'll make sure that you get home after school is over. Just behave yourself and do what Mrs. Stogbuchner tells you."

### Chapter 3

"Now, let's get you into class," said Mrs. Jackson. They went to the last door on the right side of the hall, and Mrs. Jackson looked through a little window in the door.

"Is it recess time already? The class must be outside." She opened the door and they went into the classroom. It was a bright cheerful room, with windows all along one wall and chairs pulled up around low tables.

"This will be your classroom," Mrs. Jackson said. They walked to a door in the back of the classroom and went outside.

"Let's see if we can find them. They should be on the playground. That's around this way." Hand in hand, they went around to the back of the school building.

There was the playground. And the class. So many humans. Baartock had never seen that many humans. They were swinging, racing around, climbing, playing, and just standing. They were laughing and yelling and screaming. They were all having fun. Baartock was so interested, that he didn't see the woman coming over to them.

"Baartock, this is your teacher, Mrs. Stogbuchner," said Mrs. Jackson. "Mrs. Stogbuchner, this is Baartock. This is his first day, isn't it Baartock?"

"First day," said Baartock, still looking at the children.

"Nice to have you in my class, Baartock," said Mrs. Stogbuchner. "I'm sure you will enjoy it here."

"I'll come see that you get on the right bus to get home, Baartock," said Mrs. Jackson. "Why

don't you go play. But, please behave yourself. I want to talk to Mrs. Stogbuchner for a moment."

Baartock started walking over to where the children were playing. He was thinking so many different things. It was his first day and he should be scaring people, and here were humans to scare. But there were just so many of them, all running and laughing and playing. Nobody was paying any attention to him. They weren't even looking at him. Baartock couldn't think of any way to scare anybody. This was all so new, and not the way it was supposed to be. He was suddenly scared. He didn't know what to do.

Baartock had been slowly walking by the fence that went around the playground. When he got to the jungle gym, he stopped and watched the three boys who were climbing on it. He wasn't quite sure why they were climbing and chasing each other, but they seemed to be having fun. Suddenly, Baartock jumped up on the bars and climbed up to the top. It was like climbing a tree, but it was different, too. He was just sitting there, looking around, when one of the boys, the one with red hair, climbed up beside him.

"Hi. I'm Jason. Are you new?"

"No, I'm Baartock," he said. He wouldn't want a dumb name like 'New'.

All the other children were about the same size as Baartock, but Jason was even bigger. He was trying to think what to say to this red haired boy.

Then Jason started to climb down again. When he was just a little way down, he called, "Try to catch me, Baartock!"

Baartock knew what to do. He started climbing down, chasing Jason as fast as he could. By now, Jason was on the ground, running past the swings. When Baartock got down, he started running. He ran past the swings, past the slide. He was catching up to Jason, he had almost caught him, when there was a whistle and Jason stopped. Baartock crashed into him and they both fell down. Jason got on his feet right away.

"We've got to go in now," he said as he pulled Baartock to his feet. "We have to go line up. Come on."

Baartock didn't understand what they were going to do, but he walked along with Jason. As they walked over to where Mrs. Stogbuchner was standing, Baartock said, "I caught you."

"I can run faster," answered Jason. "Next time you won't."

Mrs. Stogbuchner again blew her whistle. "Recess is over. Time to go inside," she called. Then she saw Baartock and Jason. "Making friends already, Baartock? Jason, please let Baartock sit next to you and help him along today."

"Yes, Mrs. Stogbuchner," said Jason.

"Everybody settle down," called Mrs. Stogbuchner as she walked past the children, who were lining up.

"I'm supposed to be first today, right, Mrs. Stogbuchner?" called a boy from the front of the line.

"All right, Jimmy," she answered.

"There. I told you so," Jimmy said loudly to the girl standing next to him.

"Don't start a fight about it, Jimmy," said Mrs. Stogbuchner, who was now at the back of the line. "Let's walk inside quietly. No running!" she called, as Jimmy started rushing off.

In just a few minutes, Baartock found himself sitting right next to Jason, at one of the low tables in the classroom. Mrs. Stogbuchner, standing in front of the classroom was saying, "We have someone new in class." Everybody was looking around. "Baartock, please stand up. This is his first day."

Baartock stood up, but he was embarrassed. Now everybody knew this was his first day, he'd never be able to scare anybody. He was still standing, when Mrs. Stogbuchner said, "You may sit down now, Baartock."

Jason reached up and pulled Baartock back onto his chair. A couple of children at the next table were giggling, and several others were whispering something and pointing at him. Baartock felt uncomfortable. He wasn't really too interested in the papers that were passed around. But he got interested in making the marks on the paper, when Jason helped him color the worksheet. There were so many bright colors. He got so interested in coloring that he didn't pay any attention to anything else. It didn't seem very long before Mrs. Stogbuchner said, "It's time to get everything put away now."

Jason whispered to him, "Where do you live?"

"That way," said Baartock, pointing. That was the way a troll would give directions. Just point in the direction you were supposed to go, and then walk until you got there. In spite of everything that had happened today, he knew just exactly where his home was. He had been so busy, he hadn't thought about it until now. "Want to go home," he said.

"We all get to go home in just a few minutes, Baartock," said Mrs. Stogbuchner, who had been walking around making sure that everything was put away. "Everybody sits down quietly and waits for the bell."

Baartock started to ask Jason, "What's bell?" But he only got to say "What's . . ."

Mrs. Stogbuchner was still standing behind him. "Baartock, in this classroom, 'wait quietly' means 'no talking'."

Mrs. Jackson came into the classroom and walked over to them. "Mrs. Stogbuchner, if you're finished with Baartock for today, I'd like him to come to the office now."

"Yes. We're all through. Baartock, please go with Mrs. Jackson, and we'll see you tomorrow."

When they got into the hall, Mrs. Jackson said, "Baartock, we couldn't find your file, and I do need to talk to your mother. Instead of riding on the school bus, I'm going to drive you home."

"Go home now?" asked Baartock quietly. He remembered how angry this person could sound.

"Yes. I'm going to drive you home." Just then the bell rang, and Baartock jumped three feet in the air.

## Chapter 4

When Baartock and Mrs. Jackson walked out to the parking lot, Mr. Fennis was waiting beside his car.

"Ready to go home, Baartock?" asked Mr. Fennis.

"Go home now," answered Baartock, and he started to walk away.

"Baartock! Come back here!" Mrs. Jackson's voice stopped him and he turned around.

"Not go home now?" asked Baartock.

"We're going to take you home, but we're not going to walk. We are going to drive in the car."

Walking home was exactly what Baartock had planned to do. Then he had an idea. "Don't like car. You drive. I walk," he said.

"No. Now please get in."

"You'd think he'd never ridden in car until today," commented Mr. Fennis as he got in and closed the door. "He became positively wild when I drove him to school."

"Well, he'll behave this time, won't you Baartock. You just sit quietly while we take you home."

"Sit," said Baartock unhappily.

Mr. Fennis started the car, and Baartock started to jump, but he saw Mrs. Jackson watching him. So he just sat and looked even unhappier.

The ride this time seemed much quicker for Mr. Fennis, since Baartock wasn't jumping around in the car.

"They must live in Donald and Phyllis Howard's old house," he said as they drove down the country road. "I found him just down the road from their driveway."

"I didn't know anyone had moved in there," said Mrs. Jackson.

Just then Baartock exclaimed "Home!" pointing up the hill.

"Can we use the driveway instead, Baartock?" said Mr. Fennis. "I don't want to walk up the hill, even if you do have a shortcut." He drove on down the road a little further, then slowed even more as they came to a mailbox and a dirt driveway.

"That's funny. The 'For Sale' sign's still there," said Mrs. Jackson. Out in the middle of the corn-stalk stubbled field was a weathered sign, 'Farm For Sale - Crow Real Estate'. "This is the

only house up here. They must have just not taken the sign down yet."

Baartock sat in the back seat and didn't say anything. Mr. Fennis turned the car onto the driveway and started up the hill. This dirt road did go near his family's cave, but he never used it. Trolls almost never use roads unless there are bridges, and the bridges are to live under or hide under.

The driveway went up the hill, between the field and the woods. It didn't look as though a car had been on it for a long time. The grass growing in the middle was quite tall, and the bushes growing next to the road needed to be cut back. They scraped the side of the car as they went up the driveway. And there were a lot of holes that needed filling. Mr. Fennis was driving slowly, but the car still raised a cloud of dust behind them.

Up near the top of the hill, the road turned away from the woods, toward a grove of trees and the old frame house almost hidden in the trees.

"Home over there," said Baartock, pointing back into the woods, as Mr. Fennis was about to turn toward the house.

"But there aren't any houses in the woods," said Mrs. Jackson.

"Can we look at the house first, Baartock?" asked Mr. Fennis.

"Home over there!" said Baartock again, still pointing toward the woods, but he sat quietly as they drove up to the house. There was a smaller sign on the porch by the front door, 'House & Farm For Sale - Crow Real Estate' with a phone number to call.

"It certainly doesn't look like anyone lives here," said Mr. Fennis, as he turned the car around in the driveway. "All right, Baartock. Which way is your home?"

"Home that way," said Baartock, still pointing into the woods.

"Mr. Fennis, do you think he's lost?" asked Mrs. Jackson quietly.

"Not lost. Never get lost. Home over there!" said Baartock firmly. Trolls can also hear very well.

Mr. Fennis drove the car back to where the driveway turned down hill and stopped it. "Baartock, just how far is your home?"

"Home over there. Not far. Easy walk," said Baartock. If these humans weren't with him, he could easily run home.

"Mrs. Jackson, if we are going to meet Baartock's parents, I guess we have to walk through the woods. Baartock, will your mother or father be home now?" asked Mr. Fennis.

"Mother home now," answered Baartock. He was suddenly hungry, thinking about the lizard and poison ivy dinner she said she would fix.

Mr. Fennis got out and went around and opened the door for Mrs. Jackson and Baartock. "Baartock, will you please show us the way to your home?"

They walked into the woods, Baartock in front, walking easily and quietly between trees and bushes. Next came Mr. Fennis, pushing his way through, and holding branches out of the way for Mrs. Jackson. She came last, carrying her briefcase full of important school papers.

"Slow down, Baartock," called Mr. Fennis, when Baartock got too far ahead of them. "We can't go that fast. How much further is it?"

"Home soon," answered Baartock.

"I really don't believe this," said Mrs. Jackson, more to herself than to Mr. Fennis. "Could he live out here in the woods?"

"He acts like he knows where he's going," was Mr. Fennis' reply.

Baartock was waiting for them at the dry stream bed. When they caught up with him, he pointed up the hill. "Home there," he said, starting again.

This was easier walking, without all of the branches. But there were a lot of loose rocks underfoot, and a few pools of muddy water from the last rain. A little way further, Baartock turned into the woods and stopped in a clearing by the mouth of a cave.

"Home!" he yelled, and went inside.

"But he can't live in a cave," said Mr. Fennis, panting. It had been more of a hike in the woods than he had been expecting.

Just then, Baartock came back out of the cave, followed by his mother.

"Oh!" gasped Mrs. Jackson.

Baartock's mother, Whinnurf Slinurp, was an adult troll. She was almost seven feet tall, with a slightly gray-green skin, which is very attractive for a troll. She was dressed in something like a robe, made of odd bits of cloth sewn patchwork fashion. She was a gentle troll, not mean or nasty like some trolls. Of course, neither Mrs. Jackson nor Mr. Fennis knew that she was a gentle troll. She had a basket of acorns and toadstools in her hand, which she had been fixing for dinner.

"Who you?" she asked in a booming voice.

Trolls, being larger than most humans, have louder, deeper voices. Compared to the way trolls normally are, she was being very polite. These must be humans from the nearby village. She hadn't seen humans in quite a long time. She had almost forgotten how little and ugly humans were.

Mr. Fennis and Mrs. Jackson looked at Baartock's mother and then at each other. Mr. Fennis was ready to run away right now and forget the whole thing. He was wondering if Mrs. Jackson could run fast enough to keep up. For just a moment, Mrs. Jackson was wondering the same thing. Then something made her change her mind. She had come to meet Baartock's mother or father and that was what she was going to do. So, while Mr. Fennis watched wide-eyed, she said, "I'm Mrs. Jackson, the principal of the Marvis T. Johnson Elementary School. This is Mr. Fennis, who teaches third grade there."

"So," said Whinnurf Slinurp. That was like saying 'okay', only no troll, even a very polite troll, would say 'okay'.

"Are you Baartock's mother?" asked Mrs. Jackson.

"Yes," said Whinnurf Slinurp. Proudly she added, "He good troll."

## Chapter 5

"A troll! I've been driving around all day with a troll!" thought Mr. Fennis. "I didn't even think there were trolls. Aren't they supposed to be mean? Aren't they supposed to eat people?" Mr. Fennis tried to remember everything that he had ever read about trolls in stories and fairy tales. The only things he could remember were scary.

But, somehow, if Mrs. Jackson was having the same thoughts, they didn't seem to bother her. All she saw was a seven-year-old child who should be in school.

"Have you enrolled Baartock in school?" she asked.

"What? What school?" asked Whinnurf Slinurp.

Mrs. Jackson had it all figured out now. Troll or not, this was another parent who had to be told about the importance of education, the state laws requiring school attendance, and all the other things about school. "All children are supposed to go to school," she said. "Baartock is supposed to go to school."

"Go school today," Baartock told his mother.

"Baartock," said Mrs. Jackson, "why don't you show Mr. Fennis around? I need to talk to your mother for a few minutes." Both Baartock and Mr. Fennis started to say something, but she cut them both off.

"We'll only be a few minutes," she said again. "We'll call you."

"Come on, Baartock. Why don't you show me around?" Mr. Fennis decided that one young troll was probably better than two trolls and a school principal.

Baartock led the way back toward the dry stream bed. He wasn't sure what he would be able to show. All the noise this human, Mr. Fennis, was making was scaring everything away. Even the squirrels and mice were all hiding. He pointed through the trees at a head-knocking bird.

"It's a red-headed woodpecker," said Mr. Fennis, when he finally saw it.

Then Baartock got an idea. He knew just what to show. He started up the hill along the stream bed.

"We shouldn't go too far. We have to be able to hear when they call."

"Can hear. Not far," said Baartock as he kept scrambling up the hill. This was something that no amount of noise could scare away.



"Please slow down," asked Mr. Fennis after a few minutes. He wasn't used to racing up hills, and he was getting hot.

"Not far," repeated Baartock, but he did slow down to let Mr. Fennis catch up.

At one time there must have been a lot of water coming down from a spring, because the stream bed was wide in some places and deep in others as it cut a path down the hill. But now it was dry most of the time, except when it rained, when the water would come churning down the hill, bubbling past the rocks and washing the leaves down hill. Then after the rain ended, it would stop flowing, just leaving pools to dry up in the sunlight.

Mr. Fennis caught up with Baartock at a bend in the stream bed, just where it went around a clump of trees. Baartock just pointed up the hill.

"Mine," he said.

Mr. Fennis stopped to see what he was pointing at. Just a little way up the hill was a stone bridge over the stream bed. Mr. Fennis stared at it.

The bridge looked just like a picture out of a story book. It was a low, wide, stone arch crossing over the stream. Big, heavy stones made up the pillars on each end and the curved bottom of the bridge. Lots of smaller flat stones filled in the walls, and some bigger ones topped off the walls. There were trees and bushes going up to the bridge on either side. Under the arch, there was the glitter of sunlight on a pool on the other side. It was a very pretty sight, but Mr. Fennis couldn't think why anyone would build a bridge here, so far away from everything.

Baartock ran to the bridge and stood under it, and looked back at Mr. Fennis with a big grin. "Mine," he said again.

Mr. Fennis hurried to the bridge too. He had never seen a real stone bridge like this before. "Baartock," he said, "you shouldn't stand under there. It might not be safe."

"Not safe?" asked Baartock.

"One of those stones might fall down."

"Not fall down," said Baartock, not grinning any more. "I make. Good bridge. Trolls make good bridge. I show you good bridge."

He came out from under the bridge, and went scrambling up the side of the stream bed. Mr. Fennis looked for a better place to climb up, but finally climbed where Baartock had. When he got up to the end of the bridge, Baartock was in the middle. And he wasn't just standing there. He was jumping up and down.

"I make good bridge," he said again. "Not fall down."

"Yes. It's a good bridge," agreed Mr. Fennis. He stopped watching Baartock and examined the bridge. It did seem safe. It really did look like someone had just built it. The path on each side only went about ten feet into the woods and stopped. There didn't seem to be any reason for anyone to build a bridge in the middle of the woods. He didn't even consider what Baartock had said, that he had built it.

Baartock stood watching Mr. Fennis for a minute, then he had an idea. He went over and took his hand. "Come," he said, leading him to the end of the path. "I call. You come cross bridge." Baartock ran back across the bridge and into the woods on the other side.

Mr. Fennis stood waiting for a minute, then he faintly heard Baartock call "Now!" It sounded like he had run way off in the woods. Not sure what the game was, Mr. Fennis walked back to the bridge and started to cross it.

Just then there was the most awful noise he had ever heard. He stopped to look around. And Baartock came running and screaming up from under the bridge. Mr. Fennis stood there for a moment with his mouth wide open, then he found himself running off the bridge, and running away into the woods. He was quite a long way into the woods when he realized that the noise had been made by Baartock. It had been terrifying. He stopped beside a big tree and leaned on it while he caught his breath. He wasn't used to running, or to being scared like that. He was still standing there panting, when Baartock came walking up to him. Mr. Fennis didn't know what to say.

"Good bridge," was what Baartock said, with a huge grin on his face. He had done it. On his first day. He really had scared someone.

Mr. Fennis stood, leaning up against the tree, and thought of some things he could say, but "Shouldn't we go back now?" was what he said.

With Baartock leading the way, they walked back toward the stream bed. Not far below the bridge there was a place where they could get down easily. They were starting down when Baartock suddenly stopped.

"Mother call," he said and raced off down the hill.

Mr. Fennis hadn't heard anything, but he was too out of breath to call for Baartock to wait. When he could have called, Baartock was out of sight, so he just slowly walked down the hill after him. When he got to the clearing in front of the cave, Mrs. Jackson and Baartock's mother were coming out of the cave.

"We were starting to wonder where you were," said Mrs. Jackson.

"Baartock was showing me his bridge," said Mr. Fennis. "Though he told me he built it."

"Baartock good troll. Build good bridge," said his mother.

"You mean he really did build it?"

"I'm sure he did," said Mrs. Jackson. "I've been learning some amazing things about trolls, but we must be going now. It was very nice talking with you, Mrs. Slinurp. I'll see you both in the morning," she said, seeing Baartock come back out of the cave. With Mr. Fennis following, she led the way back down the hill.

Baartock watched them leave and listened to them talk, or at least Mrs. Jackson. "I could hear that scream all the way down here," she said. Then, "Well, he is a troll, you know." He didn't hear anything else after that, and went in the cave to help his mother fix dinner. He was very hungry.

When his father got home, Baartock had told him all about what had happen to him, including riding in the car and about the school. His father hadn't said anything about that, but he didn't look too pleased. Then Baartock told about showing Mr. Fennis his bridge and about how he had scared him. That had made his father laugh long and loud, and he'd patted Baartock on the head and told him what a good troll he was. After dinner, Baartock went to bed. Later, he heard his mother and father talking quietly, or at least quietly for trolls who were quite loud sometimes, but he was tired and happy and went back to sleep.

## Chapter 6

The next morning, after his father had gone off, Baartock and his mother left the cave. They went through the woods toward the old empty house, the one Mr. Fennis had called the 'old Howard house'.

They were crossing the stream bed when Baartock saw a muddy pool he could splash in. He was just about to dive into it when his mother said "No!" When he caught up with her all she said was "Not today." It was puzzling to him. She always let him get muddy.

When they got to the empty house, there was a car in the driveway, and Mrs. Jackson was standing beside it.

"Good morning," she said. "Are you ready to go to school, Baartock?"

Baartock wasn't sure about that, so he didn't say anything. He had almost forgotten about school. That was part of his first day, but not the important part. He had forgotten about Mrs. Jackson saying she would see them in the morning.

Mrs. Jackson opened the car doors, and when Baartock and his mother got in, she showed them how to fasten their seat belts. Mrs. Jackson explained that while she was a good driver, some other drivers weren't, and that they were probably safer wearing the seat belts. His mother listened carefully to what Mrs. Jackson was saying. She didn't seem to mind being in a car, until Mrs. Jackson started the engine. Whinnurf Slinurp was a troll, so she wasn't about to get scared, but she did grip the edge of the seat very firmly. When Mrs. Jackson asked if she was all right, she just closed her eyes tightly and said "Go." But as they drove toward town, Baartock's mother finally opened her eyes to see where they were going.

This time Baartock watched out the window as they drove into town. There were lots of buildings like the old empty house that he knew. There were humans walking and lots of cars, and some big cars called trucks. Some of them came right at them, but they always just missed Mrs. Jackson's car.

He was learning a lot about humans. Mrs. Jackson had been talking almost all the time while she had been driving. He learned about streets, and blocks, which were between streets, and about houses and stores. Only he hadn't seen a single bridge. Suddenly he said, "School that way," and pointed.

"Yes, you're right, Baartock. The school is that way. You certainly do know just where you are. But we've got to go some place else first. We're almost there."

In just a few blocks, Mrs. Jackson turned the car into a driveway and parked in a space in front of a brick building. She showed them how to unbuckle the seat belts. Baartock practiced putting his on and taking it off, while she walked around to open the doors. There was a sign on the front of the building, 'Public Health Services', but that didn't mean much to Baartock. As they walked to the house, he asked about it.

"I'll tell you about it in just a minute," Mrs. Jackson said.

Baartock didn't know what a minute was, but he decided to wait and see what this house was. And if there were any children here. He had been thinking about Jason, and wanted to race him again. He was sure that he could run faster, even though Jason was a little bigger.

Inside there was a woman at a desk, who looked up as they came in. She seemed surprised when she looked up at Baartock's mother, but she didn't look scared. "Nurse Dodge is expecting you, Mrs. Jackson," she said. "You can go right in."

"Thank you," said Mrs. Jackson, and she led them down a hallway. There were several doors, and she knocked on one and was opening it when a voice said, "Come in."

There were chairs and a desk in this room, as well as a woman dressed all in white clothes, who stood up and came around her desk as they went in. "Norma, thank you for seeing us so early," said Mrs. Jackson. "Mrs. Slinurp, this is Nurse Norma Dodge. And this is Baartock."

"I'm glad to meet you," said Nurse Dodge in a cheerful voice. "Please come in and sit down." After she shut the door and went back behind her desk, she said, "I understand Baartock is to start going to our school."

Baartock didn't know anything about that, but his mother said, "Yes."

"Let me tell you about what I do here," said Nurse Dodge.

"I explained about medical records and shots," said Mrs. Jackson.

"I'm sure that you did, but I would like telling about it anyway," said Nurse Dodge. To Baartock's mother she said, "I see most of the school children here and many of the adults too, and I try to keep them healthy. I give the shots that will keep them from getting sick. But I understand that Baartock has never been sick." "Yes," said his mother proudly. "Baartock never sick. Little trolls never get sick. Big trolls not get sick, too."

That wasn't really quite true. Many young trolls get sore throats when they first start to practice their screaming. That was because they would shriek instead of yelling or screaming. Their mothers would make them gargle with warm salty water and that would usually make them better right away. But other than that, young trolls never got colds or fevers or were ever sick.

"But if you never get sick," asked the nurse, "how do you know about being sick?"

"I see humans sick before," answered his mother. "Not same for trolls. Maybe break arm, break leg same as humans. There are troll ways to fix trolls. Trolls never get human sick."

Baartock didn't like to remember about breaking things. During the summer, when he was building his bridge, an arch stone had fallen on his hand and it broke two of his fingers. It had really hurt. His mother had put some salve on his fingers so they wouldn't hurt and would heal faster, then she had straightened them and wrapped them. When she unwrapped them two days later, they weren't broken any more, and he went back and finished his bridge. But he remembered how much it hurt, and he was more careful after that.

He stopped listening to what the adults were saying. He was getting tired of just sitting. There wasn't anything in the room to interest him, but there was an open door to another room, so he got up to look at it.

There wasn't much in that room either. Just a little bed and a lot of little doors under a counter. They were too small for an adult to go through, but he thought that he might fit through some of them. He was just about to go look behind those doors when his mother said, "Baartock sit!"

Baartock went back and sat down and waited some more. He waited for what he thought was quite a long time. The adults just kept talking. Talking about him. He knew that they would keep on talking and then either he would have to do something now, or else he couldn't do something until he was bigger. And he was right. After all the talking, they agreed that he had to have a shot. Nurse Dodge went in the other room and came back with a tiny bottle and something she called a 'needle'. Baartock's mother did a lot of sewing, but this wasn't like any needle that Baartock had ever seen before. She put something from the bottle into the needle, then came over to Baartock. He was watching her carefully.

"This may hurt a little, Baartock," she said. "You might want to look over at your mother." Then she wiped his arm with something that smelled awful and made his arm wet, and she stuck the needle in his arm. It did hurt, a little like getting stuck by a thorn on a bush in the woods.

Then she pulled the needle out and said, "That wasn't too bad, was it?"

"Not hurt," said Baartock, though it did hurt some.

Nurse Dodge put the needle in a metal trash can and put the little bottle back in the other room. Then she went back behind her desk and wrote something on a piece of paper. "The school needs this to show that Baartock has had his required shots," she said, "and I'll keep a copy here."

"Well, Baartock," said Mrs. Jackson, "shall we go to school now?"

"Go see Mississtog-Buchnersklass? Go see Jason?" asked Baartock.

"Yes. We should hurry, so we'll be there before lunch."

They left the house and got back in the car. Mrs. Jackson let Baartock put on his seat belt himself, but she checked to make sure it was fastened.

## Chapter 7

They got out of the car after the short drive to the school.

"Go home now," Baartock's mother announced, and started walking down the sidewalk, leaving Baartock and Mrs. Jackson standing by the car.

"But," Mrs. Jackson called hurriedly, "I'll drive you home."

"No," was Whinnurf Slinurp's answer. She didn't look back or even slow down, but walked off quickly toward home. She had had enough of humans and their strange ways for one day.

"How strange," Mrs. Jackson thought also. "I certainly hope it wasn't something that I said. I wonder if that's just the way trolls are?" They watched as Baartock's mother walking quickly down the sidewalk and around the corner of the school building and out of sight.

She said, "All right, Baartock, let's get into school. Before you go to your class, we have to stop by the office." They went in the front door and down the hall to the office. Baartock knew this room now. It was near the front door and it was the only door with a big glass window in it. All the doors either had no window at all or only a little one, up high, that he wasn't tall enough to look through.

"Mrs. Jackson, I'm glad you're here," Ms. Laurence said all in a rush. "There were some wasps in Mrs. Breckenridge's class and they couldn't get them out. Some of the children got frightened. She took her class out to the playground and Mr. Blevis is trying to get rid of the wasps."

"Good. For a moment I thought that I was supposed to catch the wasps," Mrs. Jackson said laughing. "I'm sure that Mr. Blevis can take care of it. Would you get a new student kit for Baartock? There should still be some left in the supply room."

Ms. Laurence came out from behind her desk and went out the door. Mrs. Jackson said, "She's getting some things you'll need for school; tablets of paper, scissors, crayons, and pencils. When they're used up you can buy more from the school store. Mrs. Stogbuchner can tell you about it."

Baartock was about to ask what Mrs. Jackson was talking about, because there were so many words she used that he didn't know. She had talked about stores when he was in her car. Mississtog-Buchnersklass had let him have some crayons to use, those little sticks that made wonderful, colorful marks on the paper. He wanted to know if some of the other things were just as great as crayons, when Ms. Laurence came back in the office and gave him a box and some pads of paper.

"These are for you, Baartock," she said.

"You give me?" he asked. He hadn't expected someone to give him anything. He was embarrassed, because he didn't have anything to give her.

"Yes, I'm giving them to you. These are yours."

"We usually say "thank you" when someone gives us something," said Mrs. Jackson.

"Thank you," said Baartock. He thought about it and then decided that it was just the human way of giving things.

"You're welcome, Baartock," said Ms. Laurence, as she went

back to her desk.

He opened the box and looked inside. There were a lot of things in it. Most of them he didn't understand, but there was a box full of crayons, just like the ones he had used the day before.

"There's a place on the box for your name," said Mrs. Jackson. "Why don't I write Baartock on this one, so that we'll know that it's yours. All the new students have a pencil box just like this. We have to be able to tell them apart." She got a pen from the counter and wrote 'BAARTOCK' in big letters on the top of the box.

Baartock looked at the marks she had made on it. "This say my box?" he asked.

"Yes," said Mrs. Jackson. "This word is 'Baartock'."

He looked at the marks some more, then got the pen from the counter. On one end of the box, he made another mark. It was a mark his mother had shown him how to make, his special mark. He had practiced making it and put it on all his things. He even had cut it into one of the stones of his bridge, working carefully, the way his father had shown him.

"This say my box, too," he said, holding it up for Mrs. Jackson to see. "Now I know my box."

What Mrs. Jackson saw was not a scribbled mark that she might have expected, but carefully printed letters. They were letters of an alphabet she didn't recognize, but still clearly letters. It was just one more new thing that she now knew about trolls. She already knew more about trolls than anyone else in town. There were only three people who even knew that there were trolls.

"Good. We all know that it's Baartock's pencil box. Now, it's almost lunch time," she said, looking up at the clock high up on the wall. "We'd better be getting you to your class, before they go to lunch without you. Aren't you getting hungry?"

Baartock hadn't thought about food, until Mrs. Jackson mentioned it. Suddenly he was hungry, very hungry. It had been a long time since his breakfast bowl of porridge and some left-over acorns and toadstools from dinner.

"Yes. Hungry," he said.

## Chapter 8

It wasn't quite time for lunch, when Mrs. Jackson and Baartock got to his classroom. Mrs. Stogbuchner was in the back of the room, reading to the class from a big storybook. The children had gathered their chairs in a circle around her, and had been listening to the story, until Baartock came in. Then there was a flurry of activity. Jason jumped up and brought a chair over, right next to his, for Baartock to sit on. Several of the children started talking and some more had to move their chairs around. Jason had to ask Baartock where he had been and then started to tell him about the story they were listening to. It was a few minutes before the class was all settled again and ready to get back to the story.

The rest of the story didn't make much sense to Baartock, and he was tired of listening to grown-ups talk. He'd been listening to talking all morning. He was hungry and wanted something to eat. Finally the story was over and Mrs. Stogbuchner had them put their chairs back at the tables and then line up to go to lunch. As soon as they were waiting quietly, she opened the door and led her class down the hall to the cafeteria. This was a big room that Baartock hadn't seen before. There were lots of tables and chairs and all along one side there were humans fixing food. The smell of food made him even hungrier. Baartock wanted to rush over and get something, but he had to stay in line. He had time to look around. He saw Mrs. Jackson talking to some other adults sitting at a table in the back of the room.

"All right, dear, here's your tray."

One of the women handed him a big flat thing. Then Baartock saw that all the children in front of him were sliding their trays along, and adults were putting plates of food on the trays. So he slid his along too. One woman handed him a plate of food. Another gave him a little dish with some yellow pieces that smelled a little like fruit. Jason stopped him and gave him a funny shaped box with something cold inside.

"If you don't want your milk, I'll drink it," he said grinning.

As they got to the end of the line, Baartock was just about to take his tray to a table just as everyone else had.

"Where's your lunch money, dear?" asked the woman at the end of the line.

"What's money?"

"Come on Baartock, give her your lunch money." Jason reached over and gave the woman some metal pieces. Then Baartock remembered. His mother had given him some metal pieces, telling him that humans used them. He reached in his pocket and gave some of them to the woman. He picked up his tray and followed Jason to a table.

"You're supposed to get a fork and spoon when you get your tray," Jason said, looking at Baartock's tray as he opened his milk carton. "You can use my spoon."

He took the spoon from Jason, and started to eat. The food was awful.

"What's this?" he asked Jason with his mouth full. He pointed at the brown stuff on his plate.

"Meatloaf," Jason answered, putting another forkful in his mouth.

Baartock tried the white lumpy stuff that had something brown poured over it. It tasted so bad that he wanted to spit it out, but he was so hungry that he swallowed it instead. The slice of bread he recognized, and it wasn't too bad. At least he could eat it, anyway. He tried a little bit of the yellow fruit. It tasted as though it had been soaking in honey, it was that sweet. It didn't even really taste like fruit. Baartock looked over across the table. Jason's plate was empty already. He looked around the cafeteria.

All the children were eating the food. The others at their table were eating it.

"Don't you like it?" Jason asked.

Baartock couldn't think of anything to say. It was that awful. He just shook his head 'no'. Didn't humans eat anything that he could eat? He was still very hungry.

"If you're not going to eat it, can I have it?" Jason was just about to take Baartock's plate, when he saw Mrs. Jackson walking right toward their table. Instead, he said, "I'll meet you out on the playground," and picked up his tray and got up. Baartock saw the empty trays were being taken over to a window in the wall, and were left there. He was about to get up and follow Jason, when Mrs. Jackson called to him. "Baartock, did you give these to the cashier?" She was holding the metal pieces he had given the woman.

He nodded. "Mother give me."

"Well, you can't pay for your lunch with them," she told him. "They're much too valuable. These are gold coins." She held out the smallest yellow metal one. "This is worth more than the price of a whole year of school lunches. Do your mother give you any other coins?"

He reached into his pocket and got out the rest of the coins and handed them to Mrs. Jackson.

"These are all old coins," she said, examining them. "Most of these coins are made of silver. There isn't a new coin here." She reached into her pocket and pulled out a coin to show him.

"These are the new coins," she said, showing him the ones she had. "Yours might look the same, but they're much older and worth much more. I'll have to talk to your mother about these. You really shouldn't bring something so valuable to school. You might lose them."

Baartock didn't know what 'valuable' was, and was going to tell her that his mother had a jar full of these coins, but Mrs. Jackson noticed his plate still full of food.

"I thought you were hungry." "Am hungry," he said, then pointed at the plate. He remembered the word that meant just how awful the food was. "Terrible," he said.

"You don't like it? I thought our lunch was pretty good today."

"Terrible," he said again. "Can't eat."

Mrs. Jackson thought for a moment. "There's no reason you can't bring your lunch to school, instead of buying it," she said. "and I want to talk to your mother about these coins. I'll drive you home after school, so I can talk to her. May I keep these coins to give back to her?"

"Yes," Baartock said

Mrs. Jackson walked away, thinking about how little she really knew about trolls.

Baartock got up from the table and took his tray over to the window in the wall. Looking inside, he saw that there was someone to take the trays and wash the plates and forks and spoons. Leaving his tray, he went out the door to the playground to find Jason.

## Chapter 9

By the time Mrs. Stogbuchner came out to the playground to call her class, Baartock had almost forgotten how hungry he was. He had found Jason and they had raced four times, and Baartock had won three times. Then several other boys had joined in, and they'd played tag. That was a whole new game for Baartock. He liked being 'it', then he could do the chasing. When he was 'not it', he could run faster than any of the other boys, so they didn't try to chase him at all.

They went back into the classroom, and all the children went to their seats and got out their pencil boxes. Baartock was horrified to discover that his pencil box was missing. It wasn't on the table where he'd left it. It wasn't in the drawer at his place at the table. It was his brand-new pencil box and he hadn't even used the crayons yet, and now it was gone. He didn't see it anywhere.

"Hello. You must be Baartock."

He looked around to see an adult standing right behind him.

"I'm Mrs. Pangle, Timmy's mother." She pointed at one of the boys at the next table. "I come in two afternoons a week. I'm the aide for this class."

Baartock might have asked what an 'aide' was, but he was worried about his pencil box. "If you're looking for your box, I put it in your cubby."

"Where cubby?" He didn't know that he had a cubby, but if that was where his box was, he wanted to find it.

"It's right over here." Mrs. Pangle led him to the back of the room, and stopped near the door going outside. "Here you are," she said pointing. "This is your cubby."

There, just as she had said, was his missing pencil box. He picked it up and held it, almost afraid that he might lose it again.

"My cubby?" he asked.

"That's right. See, right here, 'Baartock'." At the top of his cubby was a little card with marks on it. He thought they looked like the marks Mrs. Jackson had made on his pencil box. He looked at his box. The marks were just the same. "I fixed it for you while you were at lunch."

He remembered what Mrs. Jackson said that humans say when only one gives something. "Thank you," he said.

"You're welcome, Baartock. You shouldn't leave your things on the table, unless Mrs. Stogbuchner tells you to. It makes the room messy and you might lose something. Either put them in here, or in your drawer in the table."

He didn't to tell her that he wasn't going to lose his box again. He held on to it tightly. "And over here is where you can hang a coat," Mrs. Pangle said, pointing to some hooks in the wall. "This one is yours."

There were cards over each hook, and there was a mark on one that he recognized. That must be his hook.

"You'd better get back to your seat now. But I'll be here if you need help."

He went back to the table and found that someone had given him some sheets of paper with marks all over them. They didn't look like the ones he and Jason had used the crayons on before. And they weren't.

"It's a writing worksheet," Jason said. "You're supposed to make letters on the lines that look just like the ones they've made."

Baartock looked at the papers, then opened his box and got out his crayons.

"No, you're supposed to use your pencil," Jason said, seeing what Baartock was holding.

Baartock looked around and saw than none of them were using crayons. He had wanted to make colored marks, but they were all using long yellow sticks instead. He hadn't used one of those before. He put away his box of crayons, and got out his yellow stick. He tried to use his the way all the children were, but it wouldn't make any marks on the paper. The girl sitting across the table started giggling. She had been watching him.

"You have to sharpen it," she said. "The pencil sharpener is on Mrs. Stogbuchner's desk."

Baartock got up and walked up to the desk. He looked all over the desk, but he didn't see anything to sharpen the stick with. There wasn't a knife, or any kind of blade. Mississtog-Buchner was helping a girl at one table and Mississpangel was helping a boy in the back of the classroom. He just stood there looking at the desk and waited.

"Yes, Baartock, what do you need?" Mrs. Stogbuchner had finished with the girl and saw him just standing at her desk. Baartock wasn't sure just what to say, so he held up the pencil instead.

"Do you need some help with the pencil sharpener?" she asked. Several children in the front of the class started snickering. "All right, get back to your work," she said to them as she came over to help him.

"This is the pencil sharpener," she said, and taking the pencil from his hand, "and this is how to use it." She put the pencil in a hole in a little box and started working the little crank on the side. She pulled the pencil out of the box, and it had a point. "That's how you do it. You don't want to sharpen it too much, or you'd grind it all away. Is that all you need?"

Baartock nodded and took the pencil from her and went back to his seat. The pencil now made marks on the paper, but they weren't pretty, like the marks the crayons made. Just little black lines. He looked over at Jason. He had already done two pages and was just starting on the third. The girl across the table was still working on the second page. Baartock hurried to catch up. The marks weren't hard to make. Some of them were very like the ones his mother had shown him.

He was working hard, and had just finished the first page, when the bell rang. He started to jump up, but the table was in the way, and he fell over backwards. The bell just went on ringing.

"Boys and girls. Line up at the back door," Mrs. Stogbuchner called to the laughing children. Mrs. Pangle rushed over to help Baartock up off the floor. He wasn't hurt, only surprised. And the bell just kept on ringing.

"Children!" Mrs. Stogbuchner had to shout. "Pay attention. This is a fire drill. Just leave everything and line up. Now! Mrs. Pangle, is he all right? Good. Then will you lead the class out onto the playground? Over by the fence. I'll be right along." She went over to turn off the lights and make sure that the door and windows were closed.

The children were still laughing as they went out the door. Baartock and Mrs. Stogbuchner were the last ones out.

"Are you all right, Baartock? You didn't hurt yourself?" she asked.

"Not hurt," he said. The bell was still ringing, even though all the children in the school seemed to be lined up in the playground. "What you call this?"

"When the bell rings like that it is a fire alarm. If someone discovers a fire, they sound that bell. Then you are supposed to get out of the building as quickly and safely as possible. You aren't supposed to run or fall down. Then the firemen would come to put out the fire. It's called a fire drill."

It didn't seem like a fire drill to him. "Where fire?" he asked. Right then the school bell finally stopped ringing.

"There wasn't a real fire," she answered. "It's so you would know what to do if there were a real fire."

The whole thing seemed a little silly to Baartock. He knew all about fire. His mother cooked over a fire. He had to help bring in kindling and small logs for the fire. There wasn't very much in the school to burn. It wasn't much of a fire drill. There wasn't any fire.

Mrs. Stogbuchner had walked over to the middle of the class and held up her hand. When they were quiet she started talking.

"Children. I'm very unhappy about what you did in there. What happened to Baartock could have been very serious. He could have been hurt badly. It wasn't funny. A fire alarm is very serious. Because you were laughing, you couldn't hear me, and I had to shout. When there's a fire alarm, I shouldn't have to shout, just as you shouldn't run. We are going to have to practice this again."

## Chapter 10

When the 'all clear' bell sounded, which was just one very short ring of the bell, Mrs. Pangle led the class back inside. But they didn't stay inside for long. As soon as they had finished the worksheets, Mrs. Stogbuchner stood at the front of the room and announced, "This is a fire drill. Everyone line up quickly at the back door."

They all lined up and practiced the fire drill, and because Bobby Miller was talking, they had to practice it another time.



This time, except for the noise the chairs made, scraping the floor as the children got up, there wasn't a sound in the classroom. Mrs. Stogbuchner was finally satisfied.

"Now that's the way I want you to behave the next time we have a fire drill," she said.

The class had a very short recess, because they had taken so long practicing the fire drill. They didn't get to play dodge ball, and they mostly sat around talking. Except no-one would talk to Bobby Miller, and he sat by himself on a swing, not even swinging.

"What's dodge ball?" asked Baartock. He wanted to know, even if they weren't going to do it.

"You've never played dodge ball?" Jason exclaimed. "It's sort-of like tag, except it takes a lot of kids. Some kids make a circle and throw the ball at the kids in the middle. And if they hit you, you're out. You're fast, so you should be good at it."

Jason's saying that made Baartock feel really good. He had been unhappy ever since he had fallen over when the fire drill bell sounded. When he fell in the woods, there were always rocks or sharp sticks to land on and that hurt. He hadn't hurt himself, but the floor was hard. He decided that he didn't like the school bell. It always surprised him and made him jump.

When recess was over, they all went back into the classroom and Baartock finally got to use his crayons on the new worksheets. It didn't seem very long before Mrs. Jackson was at the door.

"Mrs. Stogbuchner, can I have Baartock now?" she asked.

"Baartock, would you please put away your things and go with Mrs. Jackson."

Jason helped him put his papers in the drawer of the table. But Baartock didn't put his pencil box in with them. He held on to it tightly as he and Mrs. Jackson walked out of the classroom.

"You're taking your pencil box home?" she asked.

"Show mother," was his answer.

"Just remember to bring it back tomorrow. You'll be riding the school bus tomorrow, so I want you to meet your school bus driver."

They went out to the parking lot and there were a lot of yellow school busses waiting in a line.

"You'll be riding bus number 62," she said as they went down the sidewalk. They stopped at one of the busses. "This is the bus you'll be riding. See, number 62. Mr. Barnes is the driver, and when you're on his bus, you have to sit quietly and do just what he tells you."

They walked over to the door of the bus and the man sitting inside pulled on a lever and the door opened.

"Hi," he said with a big grin. "What can I do for you, Mrs. Jackson?"

"Mr. Barnes, this is Baartock."

"Hi Baartock. Are you going to be on my bus?"

"Yes," Mrs. Jackson answered, before Baartock could say anything. "I'm taking him home today, because I need to talk to his mother. He'll be riding with you, starting tomorrow morning. He'll be just down from where the Howards used to live."

"OK. That would put you between Bobby Gill and Laura Robinson. No problem."

"Thank you," said Mrs. Jackson. Baartock hadn't seen Mr. Barnes give her anything, and he wondered why she said 'thank you'.

"I have to gather up a few things before I take you home," said Mrs. Jackson. "Let's go back to the office."

"See you tomorrow," called Mr. Barnes, as they walked away. Baartock had wanted to stay and look at the school bus, but he followed her back inside the school.

"Please wait here," she said, when they were in the office, and she went behind the counter and into another room. Ms. Laurence was busy at her desk. He heard her say something, but she wasn't looking at him.

"What?" he asked.

"I'll be with you in a minute, Baartock," she said, looking over at him. "I'm talking on the phone."

He watched her carefully. She was sitting in a chair and she kept looking at some papers on the desk, and it seemed as though she was talking to the thing she was holding in her hand.

Baartock walked over to the door and looked out. There wasn't anyone in the hall, and he could look out the open front doors at the line of school busses.

"Now, what can I do for you?" asked Ms. Laurence.

Baartock turned around. Ms. Laurence was standing at the counter. He was about to ask what a phone was, when the bell went off and Baartock jumped. Ms. Laurence smiled at him. "I used to hate that bell," she said, "but you do get used to it."

Suddenly, there was a lot of noise in the hall, and cries of 'No running!' The hall was rapidly filling with talking, pushing, hurrying children. Lots of them were bigger than Baartock. Some were carrying books. And all of them were trying to get out the front doors.

Mrs. Jackson came rushing out of the other room. "I'll be right with you Baartock," she said as she hurried out of the office and down the hall to the front of the building. He could hear her voice calling, "No running, Carlos!" and "The bus won't leave without you, Helen."

Baartock watched some of the kids from his class go out the door. Then there was Jason, going right past the office door.

"Hey Baartock! You'll miss the bus!" he said as he kept hurrying down the hall.

"Bus tomorrow," Baartock said. "Mrs. Jackson drive today."

"OK. See you tomorrow," he yelled as he turned and ran out the door.

"Slow down, Jason," he heard Mrs. Jackson call. Then he had to get out of the doorway, because several teachers were pushing past him to get into the office. He went over to the bench and sat down to wait.

"Hello Baartock." Mr. Fennis was standing just inside the doorway, with an arm-load of books and papers. "How do you like school?" He didn't wait for an answer, but went behind the counter, and started getting more papers out of a cubby.

In a little while, Mrs. Jackson came back into the office. "We'll be going in just a minute," she said, as she went back into the other room. Baartock sat and watched the teachers and Mrs. Jackson wasn't gone very long this time. She came out with her briefcase in her hand.

"I'm ready to go now," she said. They went out to the parking lot and got into her car. She checked to make sure he had fastened his seat-belt properly, and then started the engine.

"Is there anything you'd like to see?" she asked, as she backed the car out of the parking place.

Baartock didn't have to think about it. "Bridge," he said.

"Of course you'd want to see a bridge." She had almost forgotten that he was a troll. "We were almost there this morning."

"Where bridge?" Baartock asked excitedly. He had decided there just weren't any bridges near-by.

"There's one right here in the middle of town. It's a little ways past the clinic, on Main Street. It's not too far. Would you like to look at it?"

"Yes." Then he remembered. "Thank you," he said.

"You're welcome, Baartock."

They drove along Main Street, and he recognized the little house where they had been that morning and pointed to it.

"Yes," said Mrs. Jackson, "that's the clinic. We're almost to the bridge now."

After a few more blocks, she turned a corner onto a side street and stopped the car. "Well, we're here."

"Where bridge?" Baartock asked as he looked all around.

"It's right over there," she said pointing. "Let's get out so you can look at it."

They got out of the car and walked across at the corner. Then Baartock saw the bridge. It was a simple span going over a wide stream bed, but there wasn't very much water in the stream bed below. And the bridge was built of concrete, just like the culvert he'd hidden in on his first day. Part of the town was on one side of the bridge, and there was more of the town on the other side. The road crossed the bridge for cars and trucks, and busses. And there was a sidewalk on the bridge for people to go across. He didn't know just what to say. He was happy because there was a bridge, but it was a human-made bridge and nothing like as good as a troll-built bridge. He looked at it carefully. After a while, he said, "Go home now." He'd found

a bridge.

## Chapter 11

Mrs. Jackson had a lot to talk about with his mother, when they got to his home. They had talked all morning and now they were talking some more. He had wanted to tell his father about the bridge, but he wasn't home yet. So he had to sit and listen to Mrs. Jackson and his mother. When they started talking about lunch money, he remembered how very hungry he was, and went to get something to eat. They were still talking about money when he finished eating. They agreed on a price and Mrs. Jackson got one of the small silver coins with some of her 'new' coins, and he could use some of those 'new' coins to buy milk and fruit at lunch time. And he could bring his own lunch. He was glad of that, because he didn't like the humans' food. Then they talked about the school bus. He wasn't very sure that he was going to like being on the school bus. Mrs. Jackson had explained the 'Rules for Riding the School Bus', which was the name on a piece of paper she gave to his mother. There were so many things he couldn't do on the bus. One of the rules was 'No whistling'. When he asked her what whistling was, she puckered up her mouth and made a strange sound. 'No bird noises', Baartock decided.

"Just behave like you did in my car today," she said, "and you won't have any problem. You'll like Mr. Barnes."

Very early next morning, Baartock was standing by the side of the road when the yellow school bus drove up. He was holding his pencil box and a bag with his lunch. Mrs. Jackson had shown him a place that she thought would be a safe spot to stand and wait for the bus. It wasn't right by the driveway to the 'old Howard house', but it wasn't right by the stream bed and the path he used to come down to the road, either.

The bus made a screeching noise as it came to a stop right in front of him.

"OK. Come on up. Thought I'd you'd be closer to the house," Mr. Barnes said in a loud voice, when he opened the bus door. Then he shouted, "OK. New customer today. Which seat can I sell him. I think this one," he said, pointing at a seat for just one person right in the front of the bus. There was one very big boy sitting in the seat. "Gabe, you've been pretty good this week. Find yourself a new seat."

"Aw, Mr. Barnes, do I have to?"

"Go on now. Find a seat, before we're late getting to school." Gabe gathered up his books and moved back to the middle of the bus and sat next to another big boy, and Baartock sat on the empty front seat. He looked around for the seat belt, as he started driving down the road.

"What's the matter? Got ants in your pants?" Mr. Barnes asked, when he saw Baartock squirming.

"No," Baartock said. He didn't have ants anywhere. He asked, "No seat belt?" Mr. Barnes was using one.

"No," was the answer. "They say that they're going to put seat belts in the all the busses. Maybe by the time you're in high school. You just stay in your seat, and I'll drive carefully."

The bus went on down the road, stopping to pick up children waiting by the road. Soon there were a lot of kids on the bus. Mr. Barnes kept talking to Baartock all the time he was driving. In fact, he was talking to everyone on the bus, he was talking so loudly. Much of what he said didn't make any sense to Baartock, but the kids laughed at some of the things he said. Soon, Mr. Barnes turned the bus onto another road.

"School that way," Baartock said loudly, pointing down the other road. "Nice try, kid. I know you're in a hurry to get to school, but we've got to go to the high school first."

"We can go to the grade school first!" came a shout from the back of the bus.

"The mall! A field trip to the mall," someone else shouted.

"Some other day," Mr. Barnes shouted back. They went on down this road for quite a while. They went right past some children standing by the side of the road.

"They're waiting for a different bus," Mr. Barnes explained to Baartock. "It'll be along soon."

Very soon after that, the bus pulled off the road into a parking lot, in front of a building much larger than the school Baartock was going to. The parking lot was filled with cars, and humans were walking to the building. There were six or seven big yellow school busses lined up in front of the building and lots of big kids were getting off.

"OK, high school, you students of higher education. Off!" called Mr. Barnes, as he pulled up really closely behind the last bus. All the big kids got out of their seats and came up to the front of the bus to get off. There were more busses lining up behind Mr. Barnes' bus, but they weren't letting anyone off.

There were still a lot of smaller children on the bus, when Mr. Barnes closed the door.

"Next stop, Marvis T. Johnson Elementary School," announced Mr. Barnes. But they didn't go anywhere. They had to wait for the bus in front of them to pull off. Baartock could see inside the bus in front of them. The big kids were getting off very slowly. The woman driving that bus seemed to be talking to each of them as they got off.

"She must have had some trouble with them," Mr. Barnes said. "We never have any trouble on this bus, do we?" he said very loudly.

"No!" several kids shouted back.

Most of the busses in the front of the school building had driven off. Several more busses from behind them pulled around, and parked up ahead. They waited a little longer, then finally the bus in front drove off. And they drove off too.

They didn't go back the way they had come. They turned onto another road, and drove for a long way, past a lot of houses, until they finally turned toward the school. Baartock asked Mr. Barnes why they were going such a long way.

"It's shorter this way," was his reply. "I've been coming this way for years."

"No," said Baartock. "Other way shorter. We be school, go this far."

They drove for a little while longer, then they finally got to school. There were other busses lined up in front when Mr. Barnes stopped the bus and they got off.

"See you all this afternoon," Mr. Barnes said, as they were getting off.

This was the first time Baartock had gotten to school in the morning before it started. No-one seemed to be going inside. Jerry, a black-haired kid who had played tag, was getting off the next bus in front. He saw Baartock and came running over.

"Want to go to the playground?" he asked.

They went around the building to the playground. Jason was already there, and they raced a couple of times, then they went over and climbed on the jungle gym. They were just sitting at the top when the bell rang. A lot of the children ran to the building and went inside.

"That's only the first bell," said Jerry. "We've got lots of time." So they sat for a while longer, until Jason started to get down.

"I'm going in," he said. And all three of them went into the classroom, just as the bell rang again.

## Chapter 12

School in the morning wasn't very different from school in the afternoon, Baartock decided. There were some of the work-sheets that had to be colored, but these were of shapes of things and numbers. They got to work with a lot of pieces of paper with numbers on both sides that Jason said were called flash-cards. He said that you were to add the numbers on the front of a flash card, and your answer was the same as the one on the back of the card. The morning went by very quickly for Baartock.

Then, right before lunch time, Mrs. Stogbuchner read another story. This time, he understood most of the story. It was about a boy taking care of sheep, and when he got lonely, he would yell 'Wolf!' and all the villagers would come. They got angry at the boy, when they didn't find a wolf. But the boy got lonely and did it again, and the villagers got angry again. Finally, when the wolf did come, and the boy yelled 'Wolf!' the villagers didn't come.

When Mrs. Stogbuchner finished reading the story, Baartock asked, "Why boy not scare wolf?"

"Well, wolves are big mean, animals," she said, "and the boy was probably scared of this wolf."

"Wolf scare easy," said Baartock.

"You'd just yell at it and it would run away," said one of the girls.

"Wolf scare easy," said Baartock again. He'd never seen a wolf, because there weren't any around there. But his father had talked about them. They were just like foxes, only bigger. Most of the animals in the woods were very scared of humans and of trolls, and would usually run away. There were two foxes that lived near Baartock's home, and it had been very hard to watch them. At first, they were very scared of him. It had taken a lot of food, and many nights of quiet waiting, before the foxes would come near him. Even now that they were used to him, if he made any sudden movement or loud noise, they would still run away. Anyway, Baartock was sure that he could scare a wolf.

"You couldn't scare anything," said the girl.

Baartock was really insulted. He was just about ready to do some scaring right then, when Mrs. Stogbuchner said, "All right, that's enough. It's time to get ready for lunch."

Most of the children went to line up at the door and Baartock and a few children went over to their cubbies to get their lunches. Then they went to line up also. The girl was right in front of Baartock in the line. She looked back at him and said, "You couldn't scare anything."

Baartock could see Mrs. Stogbuchner looking right at them, but he said very quietly, "Can scare you."

"Janice, Baartock, stop it right now. That's enough," Mrs. Stogbuchner said, and the girl turned around.

The class went down the hall to the cafeteria and Baartock waited in lunch line to get a container of milk and an apple. When he got to the end of the line, he held out some of the coins his mother had gotten from Mrs. Jackson, and the woman took two of them. He went over to the table where Jason was and sat down and started getting his lunch out. Janice had been waiting to see where he would sit, and she came over and sat at the same table.

"Baartock, you couldn't scare anything," she said. Baartock started to say something, but Mrs. Stogbuchner was standing near the table and she said something first.

"Janice. I told you to stop it," she said.

"But he said," Janice started to say.

"He didn't say anything. I've been standing right here. Now, just eat your lunch quietly, or I'll move you to another table."

"Yes, Mrs. Stogbuchner," Janice said, and Mrs. Stogbuchner walked off to another part of the cafeteria. Baartock had been listening, but he was hungry and had started eating his lunch. His mother had packed a good lunch.

"Oh yuch! What's that you're eating?" Janice shrieked. All the talking in the cafeteria stopped and Mrs. Jackson and Mrs. Stogbuchner came hurrying over to the table. Baartock looked over and saw she was pointing right at him.

"What are you eating?" she shrilled again. Everybody in the cafeteria was looking at their table.

Baartock kept on chewing, but he opened up his sandwich to show her.

"Snake," he said, "very good." On the slice of bread was a row of little green snakes. Some were a little bigger than others and the heads and tails were hanging down over the edge of the bread. It had been a good summer and there were lots of snakes and lizards.

"That looks really good," said Jason. "Can I have a bite?" Jason didn't really think it looked good, but he was enjoying teasing Janice.

"Oh! Mrs. Stogbuchner, can I move?" Janice asked looking up at the teacher.

"I think you should," she answered, "and let Baartock eat his lunch in peace." She picked up Janice's lunch tray and she and Janice went over to the other side of the cafeteria. Mrs. Jackson walked off too, and everyone started eating their lunches and talking again.

After they were gone, Jason asked, "You really eat that?"

"Good," said Baartock. "You try." He held out his sandwich to Jason.

Jason took the sandwich, and looked at it as if it were going to eat him. Then, carefully avoiding the snake heads, took a tiny bite and started chewing. "It's ok," he said as he handed it back to Baartock, then he quickly took a drink of milk.

After finishing his lunch, Baartock took his lunch bag, which still had some acorns left in it, and he and Jason went out to the playground. They were standing near the door when Janice came out.

"You should have had some of Baartock's sandwich," Jason yelled to her. "It was really yummy."

Janice hurried off toward the swings and Jason and Baartock went over to the jungle gym and climbed to the top.

Soon, Mrs. Stogbuchner came out to get the class back inside. The rest of the afternoon went by quickly. There weren't any fire drills, and they got to play dodge ball at recess. Baartock thought it was a fun game. He liked being in the middle. The children in the circle had to throw a big ball, and it was easy to keep away from it. Even though Baartock wasn't the last one left inside the circle any of the times, he still had fun.

They went back to the classroom and did some more worksheets. Baartock was surprised when Mrs. Stogbuchner said that it was time to put everything away. "Now don't forget about show-and-tell on Monday," she said.

Baartock raised his hand, like he had seen the children do when they wanted to ask something.

"Yes, Baartock?"

"What showandtell?" he asked.

"You can bring in something to show the rest of the class and tell about it. Something you like or you think is unusual. I'm sure that you have something you would like to share with the class."

Baartock had an idea right away about something to bring, but he didn't say what it was.

"Now leave your tables straight and put your chairs in their places, then line up at the door."

There was a lot of rushing around and putting things away, and soon they were all lined up.

"All right. I want you to have a nice weekend. I'll see you on Monday," Mrs. Stogbuchner said just as the bell rang. Baartock didn't jump this time. He had guessed that the bell was about to ring. They hurried down the hall to get to the school busses.

"See you Monday," Jason called as he ran off to his bus. Baartock walked along the sidewalk until he came to bus 62.

"You were right," Mr. Barnes said as Baartock go on the bus. "The other road is shorter." He kept on talking all the way to the high school. He kept talking all the time until he stopped to let Baartock off the bus. Baartock wasn't listening to him. He was thinking about showandtell.

## Chapter 13

Monday morning, Baartock was down by the side of the road, waiting anxiously for the school bus to arrive. When he had asked his mother what 'weekend' and 'Monday' were, she had explained that many people didn't work everyday, and took two days every week to do other things. While trolls like to work everyday until the job is done and then rest; humans like to take little rests every week, she told him. He would have to wait two extra days, until Monday, for school and showandtell. She decided that he would need to know, so she taught him the human names for the days of the week.

There were dark clouds overhead when Baartock went down the hill to wait for the bus, but it wasn't raining yet. It had gotten really cloudy the day before. Baartock remembered the human name for that day was Sunday. His father had said that they were going to have a lot of rain. Baartock liked it when there was a lot of rain, like there had been during the summer. Then there were lots of pools and mud to go splashing in, and there was water running down hill under his bridge. He liked to hide under it then, because it was even more like a real troll bridge.

He was happy to see the school bus drive up. He wanted to get to school for showandtell. He climbed into the school bus and sat on the front seat.

"Hey, Baartock. Do you know where the high school is? From right here?" Mr. Barnes asked, looking at him.

Baartock just pointed and said "That way."

Mr. Barnes stopped to think about it, then he said, "You're right. How about to your school?"

Baartock pointed again, in a different direction. "You know, you're a regular little compass," Mr. Barnes said as he started to drive off.

Baartock didn't know what a compass was, but any troll could give directions. It was easy.

They got to school earlier than they had on Friday, and Baartock went around to the playground. Jason wasn't there, so Baartock went over to the swings to wait for him. Soon both Jason and Jerry were coming around the corner of the school to the playground. They were talking about what they had done over the weekend. Jerry said that he had been to see a movie. That didn't sound very exciting to Baartock, though he wasn't sure what a 'movie' was. Jason seemed interested though and asked all about it.

Soon the first bell rang and Baartock went into the classroom. He wanted to get ready for showandtell. Mrs. Stogbuchner was at her desk and she called him over.

"I had a talk with Mrs. Jackson, and I think I should go talk to your mother," she said. "Maybe you could bring something a little less trollish for lunch."

Baartock didn't understand what she wanted to talk to his mother about, but he said, "Mother home now."

"I can't go right now," said Mrs. Stogbuchner, "but maybe sometime later this week. Did you bring something for show-and-tell?"

"Yes," said Baartock.

"Will you tell me what you brought?"

Baartock had wanted it to be a surprise, but he told her. Mrs. Stogbuchner listened carefully as Baartock explained. Finally she asked, "Do you know how to use it?"

Baartock nodded.

Then she said, "I'll have to ask Mrs. Jackson if it's all right. You put your things away and I'll go talk to her about it now." She got up from her desk and went out the door.

All the children had come in when the second bell rang. Mrs. Stogbuchner came hurrying into the classroom.

"All right. Take your seats and settle down," she said to the class. She came over to Baartock. "Mrs. Jackson said that you could show it to the class, but it has to be outside on the playground. And she wants to be there."

The morning went by so slowly for Baartock. He couldn't keep his thoughts on what they were doing. He wanted it to be time for showandtell. Finally, Mrs. Jackson came into the classroom.

"Class," Mrs. Stogbuchner said, "It's time for show-and-tell. Baartock has brought something that I think you'll all want to see, but he will have to show you outside. Since it looks like rain, I think he should be first. Everybody please line up by the door and we'll go out and see what Baartock brought."

Mrs. Jackson came over to Baartock and said, "I've never seen this. Can you really make it work?"

Baartock nodded, and went over to his cubby to get his bag with his surprise for showandtell.

When they were all outside gathered around Mrs. Stogbuchner on part of the playground where there wasn't any grass, she said, "Baartock, show the class what you brought and tell them about it."

He came into the middle of the class. "You show me fire drill," he said. "But no fire. I show you fire drill that make fire." He held out a little bow, a straight stick, and two small blocks of wood.

"Will you show the class how it works?" asked Mrs. Jackson.

Baartock knelt down and put one of the blocks on the ground and put some tree bark next to it. Then he put the straight stick in a small hole in that block, wrapped the bowstring around the stick, and holding the second block in his hand put it on top of the stick. Then he started to work the bow back and forth.

"This fire drill make fire," he said again.

"Does this really work?" somebody asked.

"We were supposed to learn how to use these in scouts," said Mrs. Stogbuchner, as Baartock worked the bow back and forth. "But none of us could make them work."

Before she could say anything else, the bark that Baartock had put next to the block was starting to smoke. Then it was smoking a lot, and Baartock dropped the fire drill and picked up

the bark and started to blow on it. And it burst into flame.

He dropped the burning bark on the ground, and picked up the bow and stick. "Fire drill," he said.

"But how does it work?" somebody wanted to know.

"Wood get hot. Make fire," Baartock explained. He held out the bottom wood block, which was still hot. The class gathered in closely to feel how hot it was. Mrs. Jackson was making sure that the burning bark was all put out.

Just then it started to rain, big heavy drops.

"Everybody back inside," called Mrs. Stogbuchner. "Don't line up. Just get inside quickly."

Everybody ran for the classroom door. Baartock quickly gathered up his fire drill and he and Mrs. Jackson hurried after the class.

When they were all settled in the classroom again, Mrs. Stogbuchner said, "Thank you Baartock, for showing us another kind of fire drill. Now, does anyone else have anything for show-and-tell?"

## Chapter 14

It was raining harder than ever when they went to lunch. Looking out the classroom windows, Baartock couldn't see the trees or the houses across the wide grass strip next to the school. He couldn't see the street. He could just barely see the grass outside the window. It was a blowing, dark gray rainstorm. At times, the wind would blow the raindrops right at the windows. Just a little while later, the rain was pouring straight down. Everybody seemed to be thinking of other things. Even Mrs. Stogbuchner kept losing her place in the story she was reading, whenever the rain would come crashing against the windows. Finally it was lunchtime.

Baartock bought milk in the lunch line, but the fruit they had were some long yellow things that he hadn't seen before, so he didn't get any. When he sat at the table across from Jason, the red-haired boy asked, "Why do you call that a fire drill?" "Drill. Make holes same way," Baartock answered, and made a back and forth motion with his hand.

"I guess you could get through wood. But it must take a long time."

"Wood. Stone too," replied Baartock.

"You can drill through stone like that?"

"Use many shafts," said Baartock, making an up and down motion, meaning the straight stick he had used. "Make hole."

Jason was about to say something when there was a sudden flash of light and a tremendous thunderblast right outside the cafeteria. The people sitting by the windows jumped up, and someone knocked a lunch tray onto the floor. One of the women who worked in the cafeteria brought over a mop to clean up the spilled food, and everybody who had been sitting next to the windows moved to different seats. The rain was now squirting against the windows, and some water was coming in under the door to the playground. The woman with the mop went over to clean that up too.

Everybody ate very quietly, as if they were waiting for the next thunderbolt to strike. While they were eating a man came in with a mop and a bucket and some tools to try to stop the leak around the door. Baartock was watching the man working, when Jason said, "Let's go back to the classroom."

"Not go outside?" asked Baartock.

"They wouldn't let us. Not in this much rain. Who'd want to go out in this anyway?"

Baartock had been thinking about going out. It was only rain. Instead, when he finished his lunch, he went with Jason back to the classroom.

Some others were already back in the classroom, in groups talking, or just staring out the windows at the rain. Mrs. Stogbuchner was sitting at her desk, with a lunch tray from the cafeteria, eating, when they got there.

"Mrs. Stogbuchner, can we get out the games?" asked Jason.

"All right. But you'll have to put them away when lunch time is over."



"All right!" Jason whooped. "Come on, Baartock."

"And please be quiet," she said, as she went back to her lunch.

"Yes, Mrs. Stogbuchner," Jason said.

They went into the back of the classroom, and near the cubbies was a shelf with some large flat boxes and some smaller ones.

"You want to play checkers?" asked Jason.

"Don't know checkers. Show me," said Baartock.

They sat in the back of the classroom, and Jason taught him how to play checkers. When some other children saw them playing, they got out other games, and soon there were lots of people playing all kinds of games.

It kept on raining very hard, and there were occasional lightning flashes and crashes of thunder.

Lunch time seemed to be going on longer than usual. Baartock had just lost another game of checkers, and he let Jerry play. He didn't like checkers very much. None of the other games seemed too interesting either, so he walked over and looked out the window at the rain. He saw Ms. Laurence hurry in and go over to talk to Mrs. Stogbuchner.

"Children." Ms. Laurence had hurried out again and Mrs. Stogbuchner was walking to the middle of the classroom. "Quiet please."

There was a lot of stirring around by the children to listen to her.

"They are going to close school early today, because of all this rain." She held up her hand for quiet. Some children had started to cheer and talk as soon as they heard the news.

"They say that this could be a bad storm, and there could be some flooding. Since so many of you live on small roads, they decided you should go home very soon. They're trying to reach the bus drivers now. If it keeps raining like this, there might not be school tomorrow."

The children were still quiet, but they were all smiling and poking at each other.

"You may go on with your recess now, and I'll have you straighten up the games just before the busses get here. Now please be very quiet, while I go to the office." She turned and went out the door.

Suddenly, none of the children were interested in the games. They all wanted to talk about getting out of school early, and no school tomorrow, and what they were going to do. They started talking quietly, but soon the talk got louder. Then, one of the boys threw a ball of paper at another boy. There was a lot of loud talking, and throwing things, and running around, when Mrs. Stogbuchner came back into the room.

"Get in your seats! Right now!" She was standing just inside the door, glaring at the class.

The children hurried to their chairs and sat down.

"I told you to be quiet while I went to the office."

The children looked at each other, as if to find out who had been making all the noise. "Barbara, Norma, Robert, and Jason, go back and straighten up the games and put them away. Do it quietly and quickly. Timmy, hand out these worksheets. Since you don't want recess now, I have some other work you can do, until the busses get here."

Timmy walked around the room with the stack of papers she gave him, putting four worksheets on each table.

Mrs. Stogbuchner walked to the back of the classroom to watch the straightening up. The room was very quiet, except for the noises from the back of the room.

Baartock started working, and soon Jason sat down and started working too.

Mrs. Stogbuchner walked around the room for a while, then she went over and stood in the doorway, looking down the hall. Soon she said, "Put your things away now. If you brought raincoats, or have anything else to take home, get it, then line up."

Baartock hadn't brought a raincoat, but he went to his cubby to get the fire drill and his lunchbag. He decided to take his pencil box home, too.

The class was all lined up, waiting for the bell. Mrs. Stogbuchner said, "If it keeps raining like this, watch the news on TV to see if we're having school tomorrow." Then the bell did ring, and they were all hurrying to get to the school busses.

"See you," called Jason, as they went down the hall. They got to the front door and the wind was blowing the rain right in at them. The floor was wet and someone had put down rubber mats so they wouldn't slip or fall.

When they went outside, everybody ran to the busses. Baartock was soaked as he got on Mr. Barnes's bus, from just that short run. There were lights on the front of each bus, and there were sticks wiping back and forth to get the rain off the front windows. But Mr. Barnes still drove very slowly to the high school. He wasn't talking all the time, this afternoon.

When Baartock got off the bus, he ran to his path to get home. The creekbed was filled with water rushing and splashing down hill. There was a lot of water going through the culvert. Baartock hurried up the hill, next to the stream. He wanted to see what it was like at his bridge.

## Chapter 15

It had rained all the rest of the day. Baartock had a great time up at his bridge. The water was racing under the bridge, making a wonderful gurgling sound. It made hiding under the arch like being in one of the stories his father told. The only thing missing was someone walking over the bridge. He would come out from under the bridge screaming his loudest and run up the side of the stream bed. He could just see them running away.

Right then it really didn't matter that there wasn't anyone crossing his bridge. Baartock now knew so many humans and so much about them, that was easy to pretend who was walking up to cross the bridge. There was Mr. Fennis, of course. He had run away so wonderfully. Then there was Ms. Laurence. Baartock could scare her easily. He didn't pretend to scare Mrs. Jackson or Mrs. Stogbuchner. Somehow they didn't seem like people to scare. But that girl in his class, Janice, Baartock scared her again and again. And some of the other children in the class. They were all so easy to scare. He was having a great time.

He even pretended that Jason was helping him scare people. Not that Jason was anything like a troll, but Baartock liked him and he thought Jason would have fun scaring people.

After a while, when it started to get dark, Baartock went back home in the rain. He was glad that his father had known it was going to rain. They had gathered in extra firewood. Even though it wasn't cold, the fire warmed the cave and helped him to dry off.

Though it had been raining all day, his mother had fixed an extra good meal. Baartock really liked the cricket and green bean salad. Later they all sat around the fire and his mother patched his pants and sewed on the new winter coat she was making, and his father told stories. He stayed up late, and it was still raining hard when he finally went to bed.

The next morning it was still raining, and his mother told him to go wait for the bus, but if it didn't come when it should, to come back home. And his father surprised him by saying he would be staying home if it kept on raining. The room he was working on in the cavern would probably be flooded, and he wouldn't be able to work.

So, while it was still raining quite hard, Baartock went down to stand by the side of the road and wait for the school bus. Actually, he wasn't waiting right beside the road in the rain, but back a little way, under some trees that still had lots of leaves. He thought he could see the bus in time to come out and catch it. He waited and waited, but he didn't see a bus or a car or anything coming down the road. He went over to look at the culvert. Rain water was coming roaring down the stream bed right at the culvert, but there was so much that it couldn't all get through. There were branches and rocks that had come down with the water that were blocking the opening. It was beginning to make a pool on that side of the road. On the other side, it was shooting out of the culvert, but it was beginning to make a pool there too.

When Baartock felt he had waited long enough, he went back home. His father was carving out some extra shelves in the kitchen. He went to watch his father work, and started handing him tools. They worked most of the morning. His mother came back home and saw the mess they were making, and started making some sandwiches. They all finished about the same time, and his mother chased them both out of the cave so she could clean up. There were rock chips all over the kitchen.

Then Baartock and his father went up and sat under his bridge and ate their sandwiches. For a while, his father told stories, about when he had been a young troll, before he'd earned his name. Then they looked at some places that Baartock had had trouble with building his bridge. They stood in the stream and the pouring rain, and his father showed him some better ways to do the stone-work. They even took a few of the stones out, and his father worked on them, then they put them back. Baartock was much happier about the way the bridge looked now. Then his father showed him places where the water might weaken the bridge if they weren't fixed, not today, but later when the rain stopped and the water went down.

While they were working the rain eased up as if it were going to stop, then it started coming down again as hard as before. They had quite a busy afternoon, and his father said that it was time to go home, even if there was still a mess in the kitchen for them to clean up.

It rained all the next day, too. Not as hard as before, just a steady rain that went on and on. Baartock went down in the morning to see if the bus would come, but it didn't. He waited a long time, playing beside the stream, but nothing came along the road.

The culvert that he had hidden in was completely blocked now, with branches and rocks. The water had made a big pool, and it was flowing over the road. He went up the hill a little way and sat there, dropping small branches into the stream, and watching them float down, across the pool and across the road.

After a while, he went back home. It was such fun to splash his way up the stream. He got thoroughly soaked. When he got home and dry, he helped his father make one of the closets larger. His father chipped and dug at the rock wall, and Baartock swept and picked-up, and carried all of the trash outside in a bucket. They worked most of the afternoon. Dinner was a simple meal. It had been too wet to go get anything, so it was mostly left-overs.

The rain stopped just after dinnertime, and Baartock went out to look around. It was getting dark, but he walked up to his bridge. He was worried about the spots his father had pointed out. When he got there, his bridge was all right. An opossum was hiding under the arch, trying to stay dry, and it growled at him. It wanted to be left alone and Baartock was able to see what he wanted to, without chasing it off.

Going home in the dark, he slipped and fell into the stream a couple of times. He was glad to sit by the fire and get dry, now that he knew that his bridge was safe.

The next morning it wasn't raining, though there were still a lot of clouds overhead. But they were blowing away, and it might be sunny later. Baartock walked down to wait for the bus. He went down the path beside the stream. Even though the rain had stopped the night before, the stream was just as full as it had been when it was raining. It was still rushing and splashing its way down the hill.

Baartock couldn't get all the way to the road. The water had risen even higher. It wasn't a pool, it was a lake. The road was completely under water. It was almost as deep as he was tall. During the night, two of the trees beside the stream had fallen over, and were lying across the road. The holes, where the roots had been were filled with water. And there was still more water coming down the stream. He walked along the edge of water for a long way. Finally, near the driveway to the 'old Howard house', there was no more water covering the road.

Baartock played by the side of this new lake for a while, skipping stones. When he grew tired of that, he went up the driveway, and home. He left his lunch bag, and went up to check on his bridge again. The opossum was gone, but there was still too much water for him to work on his bridge, and he went back home.

His father had decided that he couldn't go to work again, so he was sleeping late. His mother was busy in the kitchen, so Baartock got out his pencil box and some worksheets he had brought home from school and sat near the mouth of the cave and did them again.

## Chapter 16

The sun started to come through the clouds, and Baartock moved his stool outside the cave. He was just about to get back to work, when he heard someone coming up the hill. He put his pencil box and worksheets on the stool and went inside to tell his mother. They were just coming out of the cave when Mrs. Jackson and Mrs. Stogbuchner came into the clearing.

"Hello, Mrs. Slinurp. Hello, Baartock," called Mrs. Jackson. To Baartock's mother, she said, "This is Baartock's teacher, Mrs. Stogbuchner."

"I'm pleased to meet you," said Mrs. Stogbuchner. "I told Baartock that I wanted to meet you this week."

No-one asked if Baartock had remembered to tell his mother, but the way she looked at him said that he had forgotten.

"I hope we're not coming at a bad time," Mrs. Jackson said. "No," said his mother. "You want to talk?"

"Baartock, I see you've been doing some school work. I think that's a very good," said Mrs. Stogbuchner, looking at the worksheets. Then she followed his mother and Mrs. Jackson into the cave.

Baartock thought about checking his bridge again, but it was nearly lunch time, and after lunch maybe his father could help him work on it. So he sat back down in the sun, and kept working on the papers. He could hear the adults' voices, but he couldn't hear what they were saying.

After a while he decided he was hungry and went to look for his lunch bag. He remembered putting it in the kitchen, so he went to get it. The adults were still talking, and he didn't think they had even noticed him, until Mrs. Jackson said, "Baartock, something happened to the bridge we looked at."

Suddenly, there was a booming voice, coming from the back of the cave. "What happen bridge?" Baartock's father was awake, and coming out of the bedroom. The word 'bridge' would wake most trolls from a sound sleep.

Meeting just one adult troll for the first time had been a surprise for Mrs. Stogbuchner, and even Mrs. Jackson hadn't met his father. And Baartock's father was bigger and angrier looking than most trolls, even though he wasn't any meaner than Baartock's mother. But they didn't know whether to stay or run. Before they could decide, Baartock's father was in the living room saying, "What happen bridge?" again.

His mother saw just how scared the humans were, and said, "Wait. She tell."

"There was just too much water," began Mrs. Jackson, not sure what he wanted to know. "It collapsed. It fell down. There's no more bridge in town."

Baartock had told his father about the bridge, of course. And what he had thought of a human-built bridge. He wasn't really surprised that it had fallen down.

"Where bridge?" asked his father.

Baartock was just about to tell him, when Mrs. Jackson asked, "You want to see the bridge?"

"You show me bridge," replied his father. "You show me bridge now?"

Just as suddenly as his father had appeared, they were going out of the cave. Baartock grabbed his lunch bag and followed them out. They went down the hill toward the 'old Howard house'.

"We'll have to go the long way around," said Mrs. Jackson. "Your road is flooded too."

That didn't matter to his father and they kept walking down the hill. When they got to the car, there was a problem trying to figure out where they were all to sit. Mrs. Jackson had to slide the front seat up, so the three trolls could sit in the back. If they hadn't been trolls, they wouldn't have been able to squeeze in. But trolls can bend to fit into tight places. Soon they were all inside and Mrs. Jackson was driving.

Baartock opened his lunch bag to get something to eat. His father had some too, but his mother said she wasn't hungry. Neither Mrs. Jackson or Mrs. Stogbuchner wanted any either.

Riding in a car for the first time didn't seem to bother Baartock's father. Maybe it was because he was going to see the bridge, or maybe it just didn't bother him.

They did have to go the long way around, but eventually they got to where the bridge had been. There were lots of kids standing around and some adults too. There were big orange painted barrels blocking the road, so people wouldn't drive their cars too close. Mrs. Jackson had to park her car down the block. They got out of the car and went over to look. Baartock thought he saw Jason, but he wasn't sure. Besides, seeing the bridge was more important, right then.

The water hadn't really gotten that high, though the stream was moving very quickly. It was easy to see what had happened. The water had washed away the dirt around the supports, and then the supports had started to move, and the span had fallen down. It was lying, broken and twisted, in the rushing water.

Baartock's mother was interested, but she could see what she wanted from where she was standing. Baartock and his father walked right to the edge to examine the wreckage.

"Don't get so close to the edge!" a man in uniform shouted at them. He started to come over to tell them to move back.

"I look at bridge," Baartock's father growled at the man.

"Yes sir," said the man, backing away. Most of the other humans nearby backed away also.

His father looked at the way the bridge had been built from where he was standing, then suddenly, he jumped into the stream.

"Hey! Help him! Get a rope, somebody!" the man in uniform was shouting. He came rushing to the edge to find Baartock's father standing, quite calmly, waist deep in the rushing water,

examining where the supports had been.

"Hey! Catch this," the man shouted, starting to throw the rope.

"Stop!" Baartock's mother had come over. "He working. You stop or he get angry."

"But he's going to . . ." the man started to say, looking up at her.

"You stop," his mother said again.

"Yes ma'am," the man said, and he took the rope and went back where he had been standing. He just stood there watching, and not knowing what to do.

Mrs. Jackson went over to talk to him. Soon the man walked over to his car and got out a blanket and gave it to Mrs. Jackson.

When he had seen enough, Baartock's father climbed up on the broken bridge span and calmly stepped up onto the road. Several people in the crowd cheered when he came up, but he didn't seem to notice.

"Where she?" he asked.

Baartock pointed out Mrs. Jackson, still standing next to the man in uniform. They all walked over to her. Mrs. Jackson handed him the blanket, and he used it to dry off.

"Can fix," his father said. "Build right this time. Not fall down again."

"You can build a new bridge?" asked Mrs. Jackson.

Baartock thought that was a silly question. He had been sure that he could have built a better bridge, and he wasn't even old enough to have a name. "Hey! Baartock!" came a shout from the crowd. Jason was standing there waving at him.

Baartock waved back. The adults were talking about things that didn't seem to have anything to do with building bridges, so he went over to talk to Jason.

"Isn't this really something. Are those your folks? Everybody was sure surprised when your dad jumped in like that," Jason just went on in a rush. "Your dad knows about bridges?"

"Can build better bridge," Baartock answered.

Soon, Baartock's mother called him over and they got back in the car and went home.

## Chapter 17

The next day was Friday, but there wasn't any school. Mrs. Stogbuchner had said that a lot of the roads were under water, just like the road near Baartock's home. But even though there wasn't any school, the next morning Baartock was going to town.

Early in the morning, his father got him up, and they had something to eat. Baartock got the big lunch bag and his father picked up his bag of tools and they left and walked down to the 'old Howard house' and waited. The sun wasn't up very high when Mrs. Jackson came driving up the hill.

"Good morning," she called, as she stopped the car.

"Go bridge now," said his father.

Mrs. Jackson had decided that was just the way trolls were. With bridges, they were all business.

"Good morning," said Baartock. He thought any morning he could go help work on a bridge was a good morning.

They got into the car. Baartock sat in the front and put on the seat belt. His father stretched out along the back seat. He wasn't squeezed into the back, like he had been the day before. They still had to drive the long way around, but it wasn't too long before Mrs. Jackson was parking the car.

There wasn't a crowd at the bridge, it was too early in the morning. The man in uniform was there again. He didn't say anything to Baartock's father, but he did wave to Mrs. Jackson, and she waved back.

His father didn't want to waste any time getting started replacing the old bridge. As soon as

they got there, he climbed out of the car and carrying his bag of tools, went to the edge of the road. He jumped down into the water, and Baartock started handing him hammers and chisels, as he called for them. He would dry and put away the ones that his father was finished with and threw back to him.

While they were working, people came to watch, but the man in uniform kept them back. Jason came down too, but the man wouldn't let him come over.

At lunch time, his father climbed back up and dried himself off with the blanket, and they sat under a tree to eat. Baartock was hungry, but his father ate four sandwiches to his one. Lunch was quickly over, and they were ready to go back to work.

This time, after his father jumped down, he told Baartock to hand him the bag of tools. Then he walked carefully through the rushing stream, across the wrecked bridge to the other side and tossed the bag up on the road. Then he came back and told Baartock to climb onto his shoulders. He crossed the stream again, and Baartock scrambled up the other side. Then just as before, he handed down tools or put them away.

During the afternoon, a man came to talk to Baartock's father. He was on the other side, and Baartock couldn't hear what they were talking about. After a while, the man left and his father came back to work.

"Stone," his father said. That was enough. Baartock knew they had been talking about how much stone would be needed to rebuild the bridge. His father was going to rebuild the bridge the right way, the troll way, with stone and not concrete.

It wasn't dark when Baartock was carried back across the stream. They were finished for the day.

The next day, Mrs. Jackson couldn't come to get them. When they got down to the house, Mr. Fennis was waiting for them. He didn't say a word, but he stared at Baartock's father. He looked as if his eyes were going to pop out.

There were a few people already there, when they got to the bridge. And the man in uniform was there too.

The water had gone down a lot, and they worked on something new. This time, they didn't work where the supports had been, but spent the day breaking up the old bridge. Some pieces his father piled up, to keep the stream from washing away his new supports. The rest of the pieces he tossed up to Baartock, who piled them beside the road. It was a long hard day, and Baartock fell asleep in the car on the way home.

The next day, both of Baartock's parents went off with Mrs. Jackson to look at the stone they were going to build with. Baartock didn't go along. He wanted to work on his bridge. Now that the stream had gone down, he could fix it the way he wanted to. It was fun, but now that he was working on a real bridge, his own seemed very small.

He went to school the next morning, but after school, instead of riding home on Mr. Barnes' bus, he went to help his parents work on the new bridge. He spent the rest of the afternoon helping pile up the broken pieces of the old bridge.

For the rest of that week and for several weeks after, Baartock spent his days in school and his afternoons and weekends working on the bridge. For a while, trucks came, bringing blocks of stone, and big timbers they would use for supports, building the bridge. They brought enough stone to make a hill of stone, until his father said that was enough.

In those weeks, the crowd that came to watch the bridge being built grew bigger, and there were more men in uniform to keep them back. The pile of stone got smaller and the bridge got closer to being finished. Somehow, word had gotten out that trolls were building a bridge. A lot of people didn't believe it, and others didn't care. Other people heard that a man, a woman, and a boy were building a bridge by themselves, and came to watch. A few people tried to push their way past the men in uniform to talk to Baartock's parents while they were working.

Then one afternoon, right after lunch, Mrs. Jackson came to get Baartock from class. He was surprised when she said that they were going to the bridge. He usually didn't go until school was over. As they went out to the parking lot, they went past several school busses parked in front of the school. He thought one of the busses was Mr. Barnes's, but they didn't go to it. They went to her car and drove to the bridge.

When they got there, there was a big crowd just standing around one end of the bridge. Baartock's parents were standing in the middle of the bridge, but they weren't working. Baartock looked at the bridge. It looked finished, but as he walked over, he saw that there was one block missing from one side, and that block was lying on the sidewalk.

He walked over to his parents to find out why they hadn't finished the bridge. His mother just said, "wait," and kept watching Mrs. Jackson. Soon the school busses drove up and a lot of kids got out. There was all of Mrs. Stogbuchner's class, and a lot of other kids besides. They came

over to the bridge, but they didn't come across it, they just stood there with the rest of the crowd. They were all talking quietly, and watching Baartock and his parents. After a while a man got up on a little wooden platform and started talking. He talked for a long time, but Baartock wasn't listening to him. He had gotten an idea. A wonderful idea.

Baartock's mother had been watching the man on the platform. When he finished taking, she said, "Put stone in."

Baartock went over and picked up the last stone to put in the wall. He slid it into place, and the crowd started to cheer. When he stepped back, he saw the writing on the block. It was his special mark, and the letters 'BAARTOCK'S BRIDGE'.

The crowd kept on cheering, and Baartock felt embarrassed. Then he looked at his father. And his father looked at him. His father must have had the same idea, for suddenly they both started yelling at the top of their lungs, screaming, bellowing as loud as they could, as they ran at the crowd standing at the end of the bridge.

At the first sound, the crowd was frozen in place, and as Baartock and his father kept yelling and running at them, the crowd turned and ran away from the bridge as fast as they could. All the humans kept on running until they were out of sight. Baartock and his father stopped at the end of the bridge and they turned and walked back, laughing, to his mother in the middle of the bridge. She looked at them.

"Good bridge," she said. "Good troll bridge."

Here is a short message from the author of Baartock:

This book is directed at children, up to about third grade, though it should be read to them by an adult.

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