



*Newton Park's
Twisted Tales -*

The Troll With Soul



The Troll With Soul

In a small medieval town in the south of France there lived a young girl named Claudine. She lived in an average sized house which was situated on the busy town square. All the buildings were made of grey stone and appeared to be constructed in a rather peculiar, slapdash fashion. There was no apparent regularity to the stonework or tiling yet the houses have stood on this square for hundreds of years. In fact, Claudine's great, great grandparents had once lived in the house she now resides with her mother and father. This incredibly intricate stone craft gave the town a real sense of character and history.

Both of Claudine's parents were well respected in the town, they owned the local patisserie. She loved the fact her mother and father could create such wonderful food. Artisan breads and delicate pastries were their speciality and the local town folk spent a lot of money in their quaint, modest boutique. Sometimes on busy weekends Claudine would work the counter and was a very popular, well mannered little girl. Every Thursday and Saturday there was a small market on the square, this would bring strangers to their town. Claudine loved these days the most as she got to meet and chat to all sorts of new people of all different ages.

She was always a very cheerful girl, all her friends lived close by and her school was only a short walk. Although it was an unassuming, quite peaceful town, there was one thing that made outsiders visit there in their droves. Rumour had it, that in the forest that surrounded the town there lived a fierce, dangerous and cruel Troll. It had been a big part of the town's folklore for at least a hundred years. Terrifying tales of children who had ventured into the dark woods and never returned, captured and eaten by the monstrous beast. Or so the stories would have you believe. There was no proof of these stories and certainly no evidence of any atrocities.

Claudine always found these fables intriguing, when brave hunters would come into the town and tell of their close encounters with the fearsome forest fiend, she would listen intently to their words. She couldn't believe any living being would be totally evil. So, one Sunday afternoon when all the shops had closed on the square, she packed some bread and pastries into a bag and headed out of town.

She wasn't scared, if anything she was giddy with excitement as she left her home behind her and headed out into the green countryside.

She skipped happily along the dry, brown track which lead straight through the middle of a vast corn field. Steadily she moved on until the fields ended and the trees began. As she entered the forest, the track was well defined and winded pleasingly through the vast trunks. It was quite a calm and tranquil place. Above her head she could hear the birds sweetly tweeting and in the distance the gentle sound of water meandering down a stream. How could such a serene and relaxed place be home to such a horrific and gory past? The further she walked the more narrow the path got, until it wasn't even a path or a track. She was just fighting her way through thorny bushes and low branches from the closely huddled trees. A few minutes passed and she looked back, she looked to the left and then to the right and she realised she was terribly lost. Claudine didn't really know what she was going to do, she hurried back along the route she thought she took. Unfortunately, all that happened was she got more confused. She started to cry, she had no idea how to get back or whether she'd ever see her mother and father again. She sat down on a rock and nibbled on a croissant. As she struggled to swallow the soft, flaky pastry through her sobbing, she thought she heard a sound. It was close and was the most beautiful, enchanting thing she'd ever heard. She was drawn to it like a moth to a flame, her legs moved as if she wasn't in control. Before she knew it she was looking out onto a stream, but what else she saw left the little girl opened mouthed. Crouching in the clear, flowing water was a huge creature. He looked as if he was the size of a tree, but much broader. His clothes were rags and his skin looked quite greyish in colour. His dark brown hair was all greasy and matted, whilst his huge face and giant, bulbous nose was smothered with scars and warts.

She turned to run, this terrifying sight was enough to make the bravest man's blood run cold. But she was still, as if hypnotised by the beautiful melody that seemed to come from the beastly behemoth. When the ghastly gargantuan turned, it was confirmed that the rich, sweet, innocent sounds were coming from the mouth of this gigantic creature.

Claudine was dumbfounded, she stood there in dismay, as the soulful troll trudged back to the dark, stoney cave that sat next to the babbling brook. Claudine thought this must be the famous, fearsome Troll, but he didn't seem at all scary. In fact, she got the feeling he was probably a gentle soul, judging by his voice and the tranquil, picturesque surroundings around his dwelling.

Claudine sat for a few moments and considered her options. She could disappear back into the forest and blindly attempt to navigate her way home. This was unlikely, in fact she'd probably get more lost. Maybe she should just trust her gut feeling and hope that the Troll might help her home. She built up her courage and cautiously approached the Troll's cave. She stood outside the pitch black entrance, took in a deep breath and called out, "Hello, sorry to disturb you, sir. But I am lost and I'm so far from home. I don't know how I'll get back and I miss my mother and father so much."

As she said the words out loud, the gravity of her situation became real. Claudine began sobbing her little heart out and she collapsed by the cave, leaning against the cold, wet stone. Her head was in her hands and she was in a desperate state of despair. The realisation that she may never return home alive broke her heart. All of a sudden she felt a giant hand on her shoulder. Claudine quickly changed from sadness to fear as she knew it was the Troll, but had no idea whether he'd be kind or outraged. She dare not look, but then a calm, deep, soothing voice floated over her shoulder, "Don't cry little one, I'm sure things aren't too bad. Can I help in anyway?"

Claudine was agog, she stopped crying and was put at ease instantaneously. She moved her head from her hands and slowly looked up into his ugly, grey face. But through the Troll's hideous deformities, she could see the compassion and love in his amazing green eyes.

"Don't be afraid," he said quickly. "Everyone is afraid, or they try to hurt me." He suddenly looked more sad than Claudine had ever been. She put her hand softly on the Troll's giant paw.

"I'm not afraid of you," she said confidently. "And I have no intention of hurting you. I'm sad because I'm lost and I don't know the way home to my parents. I'm scared I will never see them again."

The Troll smiled, bearing his yellow teeth. "You are a very brave little girl, journeying this far into the forest. Never fear, I will show you the way back to your town."

"Really?" Claudine exclaimed. "You would do that for me? What do you want in return?"

The Troll shook his head, "Nothing," he replied. "I just want to be left alone, I want the people to stop hunting me and treating me like an animal."

The sorrow in the Troll's voice got to Claudine, he had been so kind to her she wanted to help him too. She thought for a moment and said, "Maybe if everyone knew what a kind, gentle soul you are and what an amazing melodic voice you have, they would accept you and leave you in peace?"

"I would love to believe that," he murmured. "But people never see past my appearance, they see my hideous exterior and think I'm identical on the inside. They judge me solely on the way I look and that will never change. They fear things that are different and whatever happens, they'll never accept me."

Although Claudine knew these words were true, she would never give up. She hated to think of her new forest friend living on his own, always fearing for his life. The Troll led her back through the woodland, all the way to the open track that lead to the familiar corn fields. With every step Claudine tried to convince the Troll to come with her into town, to prove once and for all that he wasn't a monster.

He politely declined, thanked her for her kindness and said she was always welcome back at his cave. He had found his first friend and had never felt happier. Claudine was about to tell the Troll how glad she was to have found him too, but he had already disappeared back into the forest. The little girl skipped down the track back home, thinking of ways she could help her new gigantic friend.

She decided that every day she'd tell her story about her encounter with the Troll. Claudine explained how lovely he was, how kind he had been to her and what an amazingly soulful singer he was. The people would listen for a bit, but they would soon get bored. It appears society would rather hear tales about a terrifyingly, cruel Troll, than the truth about a Troll who is kind and compassionate. It made Claudine sad, she felt like she had failed her friend, then a man approached her.

He was a complete stranger, she knew most of the townsfolk, but this man was definitely a visitor. He wore all black and had a very stern face, a scar ran the length of his left cheek. He grinned awkwardly and was chewing gum as he spoke, "Little girl, your story is fascinating. I'd love for you to show me where your friend lives. He sounds like such a loving soul, my name is Pierre by the way and I'd love to help you show everyone how wrong they are about him."

He seemed quite sincere and to be honest Claudine was totally out of ideas. She was so desperate to help her friend she would gladly accept any assistance she could get. So, they agreed to meet in the corn field the next evening, then Claudine would take Pierre to the Troll's cave and introduce him to her gigantic friend, but only if he promised to come alone.

Claudine arrived in the corn field at dusk and Pierre was already there waiting, as agreed it seemed he had come alone. So, the pair set off through the forest, Pierre was really excited, he just talked and talked about everything and nothing. All the way the mysterious stranger was chatting about the Troll, about the weather, about Claudine's life and town. In what seemed like no time at all, the pair could hear the beautiful song of the Troll.

It was a different song to the one he sang before, but equally as enchanting. The pair carefully crawled behind some rocks where they could see the peaceful, contented Troll washing in the stream and singing to the trees. Suddenly, Pierre let out a piercing wolf whistle and within seconds fifty armed men surrounded the scared, confused Troll. Pierre had tricked Claudine and now she felt distraught and foolish, she cried and felt so ashamed she ran off all the way back home, leaving the poor Troll defenceless against a heavily armed mob. When Claudine arrived home she rushed to her bedroom and hid her head under her pillow. There she sobbed and sobbed until she fell asleep.

In the morning she was awoken by the unusual sound of trumpets and the familiar voice of Pierre cutting through the music. "Come out and see the famous Troll. Come out and see the fearsome beast. The brave Pierre Pompidou has captured the deadly abomination, come out and see him for yourself."

Claudine rushed to the window and saw that the nasty, trickster Pierre was leading his fifty men through the town. In the middle of his troop, standing high above them all was a defeated and glum, battered and bruised Troll. He too looked near to tears, as he was gagged and bound and being pulled along the main road. He was also being attacked by the angry townsfolk, who threw stones at him, from a safe distance of course. She could hardly bear to watch, it was all her fault, she had to do something. Claudine rushed out of the house and followed the shameful parade. When she eventually caught up they were outside the church.

Pierre ordered his men to tie the Troll up to the giant stone pillars at the entrance of the church. Pierre stood in front of the sullen, muted Troll and said, "Here he is. A demon sent from Satan to torment and murder God's innocent flock. A message must be sent, this murderous beast must not be allowed to live. Archers, to your position!"

As his order, twenty men with bows and arrows positioned themselves in front of the now terrified Troll. The archers were ready to fire when Claudine leapt in front of the bloodied Troll and yelled, "Stop!"

The town were forced into a stunned silence. "Get away from that monster this instant," Pierre bellowed out.

"No," came Claudine's defiant response. "This Troll is an innocent being, full of love and compassion, more so than all of you put together. You should be ashamed of yourselves."

"You should let them kill me, my friend," the Troll whispered. "I'm not worthy of your love and perhaps the world would be a better place without me. Don't risk your own life on my account."

"I am your friend," Claudine tearfully responded. "Everyone deserves love, it doesn't matter to me how you look, I know there's a beautiful person within. Just sing and I'm sure everyone will see you are not a soulless beast."

"I don't want to sing in front of all these people," the Troll moaned. "I'm shy and embarrassed and I'm just not very good."

"You're amazing," Claudine barked back. "If I had a voice like you I'd sing all the time. Don't sing for them or for yourself if you don't want to, but please sing for me. I feel sad and scared, your singing makes me happy."

"If you insist," the Troll responded nervously. He took in a deep breath, but no noise came out, then Claudine hugged his gigantic leg and looked up at him smiling. Suddenly, the Troll burst out in song. The beautiful, enchanting, melodic tune echoed through the town. The people all looked on, hypnotized by the Troll's emotional tone. No longer were they blood-thirsty and crazed, they were all swaying peacefully, tears of joy fell from their eyes.

By the time the Troll had finished, the townsfolk all applauded and whistled. A group of them led by Claudine's father chased Pierre and his men out of town, then helped release the Troll from his shackles. That night there was a grand party in honour of their Troll with Soul, everyone talked and danced with him and made him feel like he belonged. He had never felt happier or more loved. When the night was done, he sat on the church steps next to Claudine and held her hand.

"Thank you," he whispered. "I think they like me now and it's all down to you."

She smiled and said, "I told you, people are afraid of things different and new, but everyone has worth, even someone like you."

The Troll proudly beamed, "You're the very best friend in the whole wide world."

"I'm not really," she blushed and then held him tight. "A true friend is always there to make everything alright."

The End...