

After the Goats Have Gone By

by Dominic Loise

The bridge troll hung onto the broken bridge. It was all he knew. His bumpy claws dug into one side while his hooves held onto the other half. The bridge troll filled the missing middle as wagon wheels rolled and boots walked over his back. People were taking their wares, produce and crafts to market. Multiple footsteps, oxen carts and horse carriages all went over the bridge troll.

Those passing over the river did not notice the bridge troll. They just thought that the bridge boards were extra slick and mossy in the middle. But the workers were all happy to not have to take the long way around the river anymore now that word of mouth spread that this bridge was passable again.

Meanwhile, big bucket tears splashed down as the bridge troll hung over the river. The tears began to overflow the river below. The overflowing river soon began to flood the nearby village of Jobville. Everyone in Jobville rushed to look after their livelihoods in the flood. The candlestick maker melted from the stress. The baker raised a panic. The butcher chopped to meet the crisis head on.

The only member of the village with nothing to do was the goatherd. His three goats had run off and he had since found himself without work. His goats ran off around the same time as rumors of the bridge opening again. So, the goatherd followed the overflowing river to see if maybe he could help the village by getting to the cause of the flooding.

The goatherd was the only person to see the bridge troll hanging in the middle of the bridge since he walked along the river and did not take the traditional path to the bridge. At the river, the goatherd steadied a broken log along the shore with his hook staff. Then, he ferried himself over the water to the bridge troll. Once under the bridge troll, he looked up at the bridge troll as they both shared how the goats affected their lives

The goatherd had nothing to herd once they ran off from him believing there was better grass to graze on the other side of the river. The bridge troll had smashed the bridge after the trolls were the first to trick him into passing over it, which no one had ever done before. Both had their identities connected with their old work. Finding someone else to connect with, the bridge troll felt relieved enough to loosen his grip splashing into the river. Popping up refreshed, the bridge troll startled the goatherd, who lost his balance falling off his log and into the river. The goatherd popped up laughing from the river. Then, an idea came to both of them..

The goatherd floated around in the river and herded other logs together from the broken bridge to make a raft. In time, people would travel miles out of their way for the thrill ride of the goatherd shepherding them across the river and the bridge troll bursting up from under the water along the way. The candlestick maker, the baker and the butcher all found it a better way to travel across the river than that old tub they used to float across in back in the day when they were afraid to use the bridge troll path.

After eating much more than their fill of the green grazing grass, the three goats drank up at the river. Hearing the story of the goatherd and the bridge troll, the three goats would tell their side of the story to anyone who would listen because they were very gruff about the positive outcome..

They would even tell the candlestick maker, the baker and last I heard, they were telling the butcher.