

## How Ugly Trolls Became Beautiful Hill Dwarves

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In the far west country across the sea lived at the foot of the verdant mountains trolls of a most wicked sort. Known far and wide for bone gnawing and eye gouging and other such inhospitable outbursts of violent angriness. And their hygiene was deplorable. Rotten teeth (of those few that remained), concomitant halitosis, toe jam, and ear wax so bad that it verily dripped from their hairy ears! Their smell would make a skunk seek the nearest patch of fragrant flowers to ward off their odorous clouds. Those who knew of them learned that at the slightest whiff of their foul but recognizable stench they would immediately bring in their most valued animals and most loved children. Sadly, in those bygone days, dwellings were small and cramped and it did not do to cram all that you spawned and owned into your abodes all at once.

Consequently, at the approach of the trolls the less valuable animals and the less loved children were left to seek what shelters that they could to escape the odor and visage of those horrible creatures. The slower and less clever animals and kids were often found after the passage of a group of trolls under some bush or in the corner of some wall whimpering and clawing at their noses and eyes to remove the recent offenses foisted upon their unfortunate selves.

It must be said, however, that the trolls of this tale are not the great huge brutes of Middle Earth and other mythical realms. Rather these trolls, though having great stench and massive ugliness were of a rather short stature. Their only real danger to those who encountered them derived more from offense to nose and eye. And

yes, they were known for their bad actions; aforementioned bone gnawing and eye gouging, and general all around misbehavior but, for the most part, owing to their diminutive dimensions, such was usually restricted to small creatures – squirrels, frogs, lizards and the like. And even those were the ones who at the time were suffering from a head cold or such ailment that prevented them from smelling the smeelies and avoiding injuries to limb and vision. Oh, they also went about naked (hence the common name – Buff Trolls). As if their visage wasn't offensive enough to begin with!

But, for some of them, something changed. The lore and legends speak and write of a chance encounter of some troll children who wandered into a nicer and, seemingly, enchanted part of the Great Forest and came across some children of a more fairie origin and nature – some even hint of a bit of magic in their makeup. This was unusual in several aspects. The encounter itself, for very rarely, if at all, did the fairie world encounter the troll world – they moved in different circles. And, of course, this was long before Facebook and Instagram and even Twitter, so, you see, their chances of meeting were nigh near nil back then. And, troll childs did not often trot about except in large odorous crowds such as to increase their ugly effect; to wander anywhere in ones, twos, or even fives was generally unheard of. But, there was a small group of troll children who had an adventurously rebellious nature and so sought sights of things other than creatures madly dashing away. The names of the first few have come down to us as Gildealeen, Barroneen, Meyerseen, and Griffineen. So, as these intrepid (despite their appearance and smell) adventurers wandered far beyond good troll sense, they encountered the fairie folk children.

These creatures were totally unlike them! They smiled instead of smelled, they laughed instead of leered, they joyed instead of jeered! They ran and danced and squealed in delight as their feet touched the grass and leaves. They breathed in great gulps of the forest breeze, filling their chests with the smells and delights of flowers and leaves and trees and brooks and butterflies (though we can't, those fairie children could tell you how wondrous a butterfly smelled!). And they dressed up! Instead of going about in a state of nature (even in cold weather!!) they wore nature! They clothed themselves with leaves and grasses, wore nuts of all sorts for hats and used dewed spider webs for decorations! The trolls had never seen nor smelled anything like these strange creatures.

Now, normally the air and wind would work against this meeting ever happening as a great cloud would proceed troll others would be warned to move far away rapidly. But, this magical day, the troll children came up a small hill and were moving, instead of with the wind, against the wind. And so ugly approached beauty - Troll encountered Pixie and a sort of magic happened that day.

The trolls were intrigued and the trixies were kindly curious. Here were two completely different worlds meeting and interacting. Now, those of us, especially those of us more ancient and more well read, have learned, that in such meetings there is only one outcome - beauty always overcomes ugly! The little trolls learned that smelling nice was better than smelling foul, being clean better than covered in dirt (and worse!!), and being covered better (especially for those who look at you) than being bare! The pixies led the trolls to the nearest strongly flowing stream and washed away the smell. (There are legends about what happened downstream that day but such are for others to tell). They scraped and plucked, dugged and dug,

clipped and combed! What reappeared, though not as fae as the fairied pixies, was a vast improvement of before – they even dug out the ear wax! But, having seen how nice it was to be clean and not smelly the troll childs immediately took up the trixie habit of covering the less comely parts of their little troll selves and gathered nuts and leaves and grasses and spider's webs other such forest accoutrements that made for beauty and light and joy!

And, without going into detail, when those transformed travelers returned to their homes, well, I don't have to tell you, home was not happy! In fact, they forbade the newly transformed children from calling themselves Trolls and they were made to adopt the big folks nomenclature for the less loftily statured and were to call themselves Hill Dwarves and were banished back to the woods at the foot of the mountains! There they developed their own culture, a society where culture and privileges of leadership depended, not on ugly and smelly, but on kindness, selflessness, valor, ingenuity, creativity, and community service. May, you one day, encounter such wondrous creatures!

