



## MELVIN THE EVER-SO-GRUMPY TROLL

Melvin lived high in the mountains, but it wasn't much of a life. He was a troll, a really big one. In truth, he wasn't all-that pretty to look at, not even to the other trolls; and he always seemed to be very grumpy. Mainly due to his grumpiness, the other trolls didn't like him; and because this meant he had no friends, Melvin was grumpier still. At the end of each week, the trolls would gather in the clearing at the edge of the forest for a party. It would go on all day and all night, but ever-so-grumpy Melvin was never invited and could only sit alone outside his cave and watch.

It was at the beginning of one of these parties that Melvin decided to leave. Surely, there was somewhere in the big, wide world where he could be happy? And there might be someone who would like him, if just a little. So, off he went, lumbering his way down the mountain paths, through the forests and the valleys, searching high and low for a nice place to live, and for someone to be his friend. But all the creatures in and around the mountains were afraid of trolls, especially one as big and not-so-pretty as Melvin; and as soon as they saw him coming, they would all run or fly away.

For many days he trudged without meeting a soul, and he was starting to think he would never find a new home. Then he did. At least, the beach he happened upon looked so welcoming. There were swaying palm trees, sand as fine and as white as snow, and a bay of sparkling water as blue as any sky he had ever seen.

"Now," said Melvin with a smile that lit up his not-so-pretty face, "At last, here is a place where I can be happy."

Just so that anyone who came to visit would know where they were, he made up a sign that said: "Melvin's Bay" and put it on a stick right in the middle of the beach. Then he set about making a comfortable shelter to live in. It didn't bother him that nobody came because he was so busy, and when he had finished, he was certain someone would visit. And he was right. At first it was just a dark shape in the water coming

towards him. Then it was at the edge where the waves broke on the shore. Finally, it was heaving its way up the soft sand towards him.

Melvin jumped up and ran towards it. Unlike the creatures in the mountains, this one from the ocean had never seen a troll before, and it didn't seem to think Melvin was any uglier than any other creature it had come across. Neither was he particularly frightening, so it didn't turn and swim away. Stopping before the strange-looking creature, he frowned and asked: "What are you?"

"I'm a turtle," said the creature, "And I've come to lay my eggs."

"I don't understand," said Melvin.

"Well," said the turtle, "I just dig a hole in the sand, lay my eggs, cover them over and sometime later my children are born."

Melvin was suddenly concerned. "Oh no," he declared gruffly, "That won't do at all. I don't like children and I can't have you making holes in my beautiful beach. You'll have to lay your eggs somewhere else." And with that, he turned and stomped back to his shelter. There he made up another sign: "No Egg-Laying" and set it up facing the sea.

A short time later, some more visitors came. This time it was a flock of seagulls which swooped down to the edge of the water. All the birds began flapping and squawking; and they were doing something else that he really hated – they were squabbling and making an awful racket. Melvin rushed over waving his arms. "Stop that! Stop that! I can't have all this noise in my bay. Go away, all of you!"

Melvin put up another sign: "No Squabbling". Off and on, more visitors came to his bay, but there always seemed something about them that annoyed him. By the end of his first week, he had met so many creatures, but still had no friends. In fact, all he had to keep him company were the signs he had put up warning about the things he didn't like: "No Scrambling. No Swimming. No Grunting," and many more.

As the sun began to set beyond the sea, Melvin was just going to bed when he heard a noise drifting into his bay. It sounded like somebody laughing. No, not just SOME body, but LOTS of bodies! And he was almost sure he could hear singing. Melvin climbed out of bed and walked across the beach to the palm trees. The sounds grew louder. Into the trees he went, through the bushes and grass, and the laughter and singing became louder still. A few more steps and he found himself standing on the edge of another bay.

Much smaller than his bay, the sand was full of creatures, all dancing and singing, including many of those he had told to go away. One of the seagulls flew over, squawked and said: "We're having a party. Why don't you join us?"

Melvin was puzzled. "I'm such a grumpy troll, and I didn't let you stay in my bay, why would you ask me to join your party?"

"Just because," said the seagull, "And, anyway, you don't really need to be such a grouch, not all the time. Why don't you stop being grumpy for five minutes and come and have some fun?"

Well, Melvin did just that. He joined the party and, perhaps for the first time in his life, he really enjoyed himself. There was just one thing that spoiled it. "You know," he said to the turtle and the crabs gathered around his feet. "The problem is space. There isn't enough of it here for all of us. But I have a terribly big bay and there's just me. If we moved to my place, we'd have enough room to have a really great party."

So, they all blundered and heaved and flew and scrambled to Melvin's Bay where they carried on the party. And unlike the party that the trolls had every week, Melvin and his friends partied all day, all night and forever. And to make sure everyone who came to his bay knew they were welcome, Melvin took down all of the signs that said "No" to something and put up just one which said: "YES – TO EVERYTHING."