

# The Finger- Eater



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WALKER  
BOOKS

# Chapter One

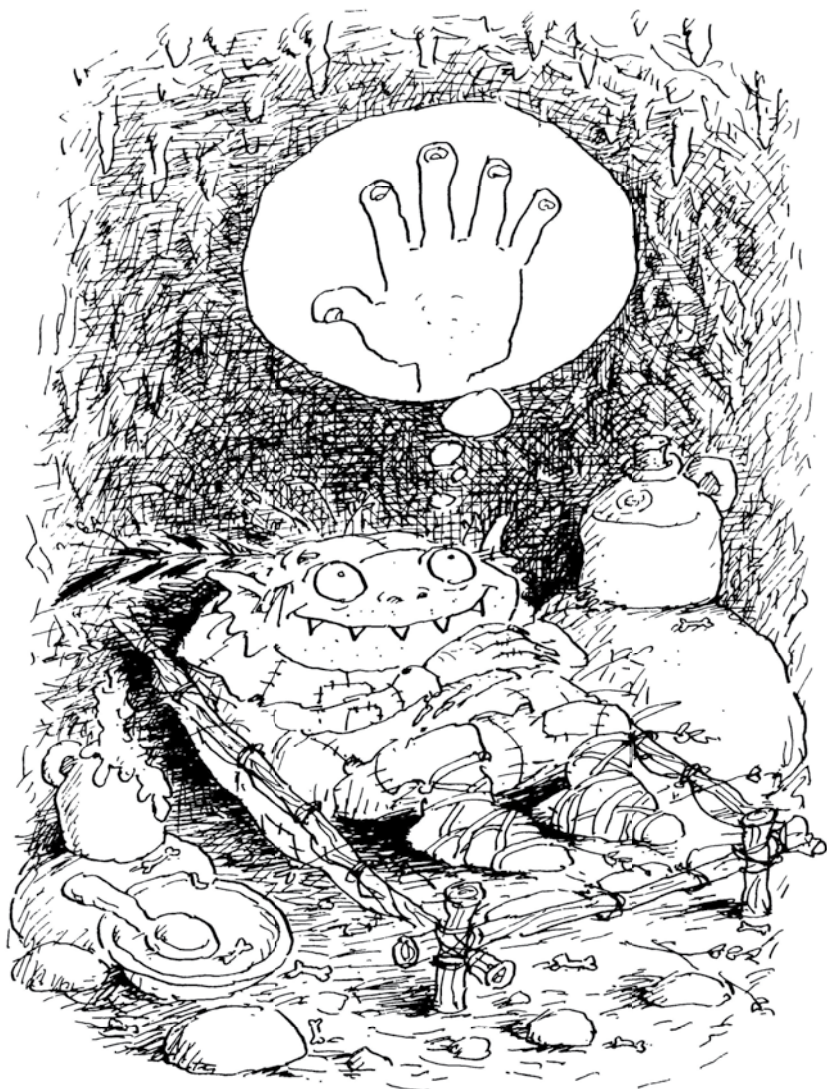


Long long ago, in the cold lands  
of the North, there lived a most  
unusual troll.

Like all the hill-folk (so called because they usually made their homes in holes in the hills) he was hump-backed and bow-legged, with a frog-face and bat-ears and razor-sharp teeth.



But he grew up (though, like all other trolls, not very tall) with an extremely bad habit –



he liked to eat fingers!

Ulf (for that was his name) always went about this in the same way.



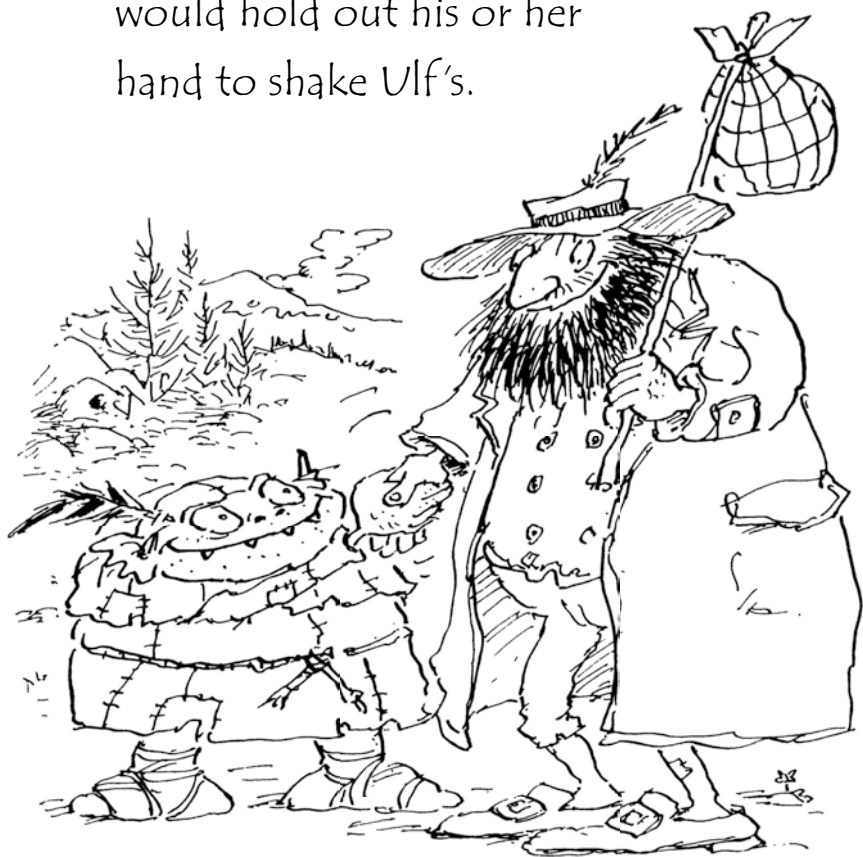
Whenever he spied someone walking alone on the hills, he would come up, smiling broadly, and hold out a hand, and say politely:

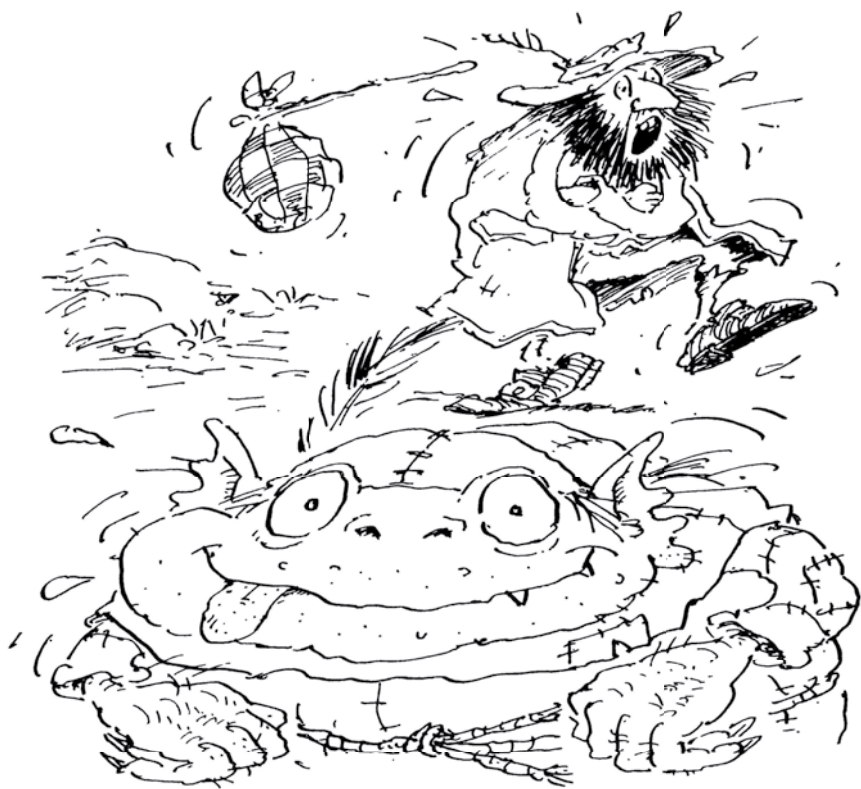


"How do you do?"



Now trolls are usually rude and extremely grumpy and don't care how anyone does, so the person would be pleasantly surprised at meeting such a jolly one, and would hold out his or her hand to shake Ulf's.





Then Ulf would take it and, quick as a flash, bite off a finger with his razor-sharp teeth and run away as fast as his bow-legs would carry him, chewing like mad and grinning all over his frog-face.



Strangers visiting those parts were amazed to see how many men, women and children were lacking a finger on their right hands, especially children, because their fingers were more tender and much sought after by Ulf.



Nobody lacked more than one finger, because even small children weren't foolish enough to shake hands if they met Ulf a second time, but ran away with them deep in their pockets.



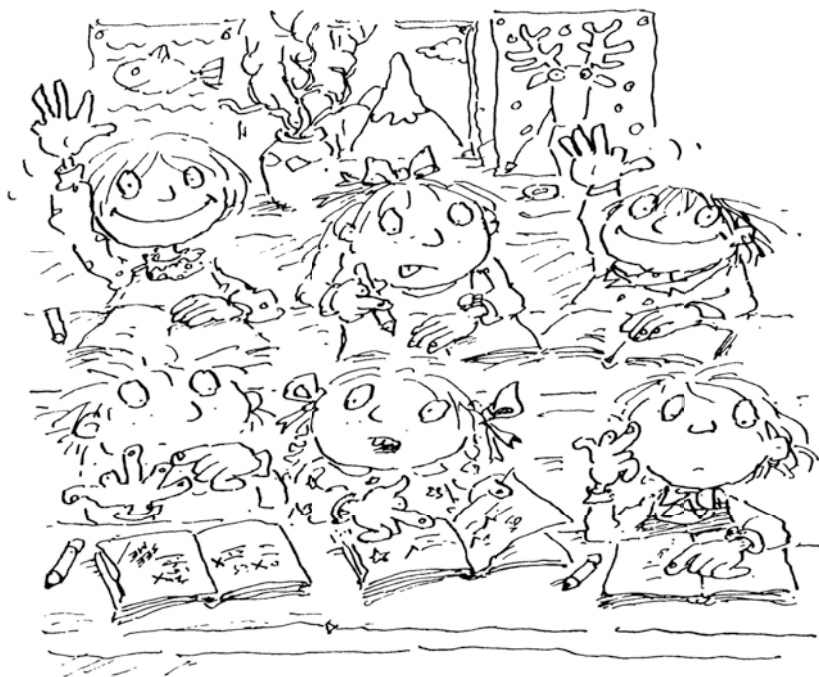
It was usually the index finger that Ulf nipped off because it was the easiest to get at, so that many children grew up pointing with a middle finger...



and holding a pencil between middle and third...



but sometimes Ulf went for the little one: thumbs, for some reason, he did not seem to fancy.



Strangely, the people of those lands were tolerant and long-suffering and seemed to put up with Ulf's bad habit.

"What can't be cured must be endured," they would say, and since they considered it was no use crying over spilt milk, they wasted no tears over lost fingers but got on with their lives with only seven.

