

Finn Family Moomintroll

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The Moomins, creatures always ready for adventure, find a magical hat that can change anything-or anyone-into something else!

Tove Jansson was born in Helsingfors, Finland, in 1914. Her mother was a caricaturist who designed 165 of Finland's stamps and her father was a sculptor. She studied painting in Finland, Sweden and France, and subsequently became a book illustrator. Her extraordinary illustrative style is seen as a design classic the world over. Originally written in Swedish, the Moomintroll books have been translated into over 40 languages and adapted for television, film, radio and opera. Tove Jansson lived alone on a small island in the gulf of Finland, where most of her books were written. She died in 2001.

Chapter 1

In which Moomintroll, Snufkin, and Sniff find the Hobgoblin's Hat; how five small clouds unexpectedly appear, and how the Hemulen finds himself a new hobby.

One spring morning at four o'clock the first cuckoo arrived in the Valley of the Moomins. He perched on the blue roof of Moomin house and cuckooed eight times-rather hoarsely to be sure, for it was still a bit early in the spring.

Then he flew away to the east.

Moomintroll woke up and lay a long time looking at the ceiling before he realized where he was. He had slept a hundred nights and a hundred days, and his dreams still thronged about his head trying to coax him back to sleep.

But as he was wriggling around trying to find a cozy new spot to sleep he caught sight of something that made him quite wide awake-Snufkin's bed was empty!

Moomintroll sat up. Yes, Snufkin's hat had gone, too. "Goodness gracious me!" he said, tiptoeing to the open window. Ah-ha, Snufkin had been using the rope ladder. Moomintroll scrambled over the window-sill and climbed cautiously down on his short legs. He could see Snufkin's footprints plainly in the wet earth, wandering here and there and rather difficult to follow, until suddenly they did a long jump and crossed over themselves. "He must have been very happy," decided Moomintroll. "He did a somersault here-that's clear enough." Suddenly Moomintroll lifted his nose and listened. Far away Snufkin was playing his gayest song, "All small beasts should have bows in their tails." And Moomintroll began to run toward the music.

Down by the river he came upon Snufkin who was sitting on the bridge with his legs dangling over the water, his old hat pulled down over his ears.

"Hello," said Moomintroll sitting down beside him.

"Hello to you," said Snufkin, and went on playing.

The sun was up now and shone straight into their eyes, making them blink. They sat swinging their legs over the running water feeling happy and carefree.

They had had many strange adventures on this river and had brought home many new friends. Moomintroll's mother and father always welcomed all their friends in the same quiet way, just adding another bed and putting another leaf in the dining-room table. And so Moomin house was rather full-a place where everyone did what they liked and seldom worried about tomorrow. Very often unexpected and disturbing things used to happen, but nobody ever had time to be bored, and that is always a good thing.

When Snufkin came to the last verse of his spring song he put his mouth-organ in his pocket and said:

"Is Sniff awake yet?"

"I don't think so," answered Moomintroll. "He always sleeps a week longer than the others."

"Then we must certainly wake him up," said Snufkin as he jumped down. "We must do something special today because it's going to be fine."

So Moomintroll made their secret signal under Sniff's window: three ordinary whistles first and then a long one through his paws, and it meant: "There's something doing." They heard Sniff stop snoring, but nothing moved up above.

"Once more," said Snufkin. And they signaled even louder than before.

Then the window banged up.

"I'm asleep," shouted a cross voice.

"Come on down and don't be angry," said Snufkin. "We're going to do something very special."

Then Sniff smoothed out his sleep-crinkled ears and clambered down the rope ladder. (I should perhaps mention that they had rope ladders under all the windows because it took so long to use the stairs.)

It certainly promised to be a fine day. Everywhere befuddled little creatures just woken from their long winter sleep poked about rediscovering old haunts, and busied themselves airing clothes, brushing out their moustaches and getting their houses ready for the spring.

Many were building new homes and I am afraid some were quarrelling. (You can wake up in a very bad temper after such a long sleep.)

The Spirits that haunted the trees sat combing their long hair, and on the north side of the tree trunks, baby mice dug tunnels amongst the snow-flakes.

"Happy Spring!" said an elderly Earthworm. "And how was the winter with you?"

"Very nice, thank you," said Moomintroll. "Did you sleep well, sir?"

"Fine," said the Worm. "Remember me to your father and mother."

So they walked on, talking to a lot of people in this way, but the higher up the hill they went the less people there were, and at last they only saw one or two mother mice sniffing around and spring-cleaning.

It was wet everywhere.

"Ugh-how nasty," said Moomintroll, picking his way gingerly through the melting snow. "So much snow is never good for a Moomin. Mother said so." And he sneezed.

"Listen, Moomintroll," said Snufkin. "I have an idea. What about going to the top of the mountain and making a pile of stones to show that we were the first to get there?"

"Yes, let's," said Sniff, and set off at once so as to get there before the others.

When they reached the top the March wind gambolled around them, and the blue distance lay at their feet. To the west was the sea; to the east the river looped round the Lonely Mountains; to the north the great forest spread its green carpet, and to the south the smoke rose from Moomintroll's chimney, for Moominmamma was cooking the breakfast. But Sniff saw none of these things because on the top of the mountain lay a hat-a tall, black hat.

"Someone has been here before!" he said.

Moomintroll picked up the hat and looked at it. "It's a rarey hat," he said. "Perhaps it will fit you, Snufkin."

"No, no," said Snufkin, who loved his old green hat. "It's much too new."

"Perhaps father would like it," mused Moomintroll.

"Well, anyway we'll take it with us," said Sniff. "But now I want to go home-I'm dying for some breakfast, aren't you?"

"I should just say I am," said Snufkin. And that was how they found the Hobgoblin's Hat and took it home with them, without guessing for one moment that this would cast a spell on the Valley of the Moomins, and that before long they would all see strange things...

When Moomintroll, Snufkin and Sniff went out onto the verandah the others had already had their breakfast and gone off in various directions. Moominpappa was alone reading the newspaper.

"Well, well! So you have woken up, too," he said. "Remarkably little in the paper today. A stream burst its dam and swamped a lot of ants. All saved. The first cuckoo arrived in the valley at four o'clock and then flew off to the east." (This is a good omen, but a cuckoo flying west is still better...)

"Look what we've found," interrupted Moomintroll, proudly. "A beautiful new top hat for you!" Moominpappa put aside his paper and examined the hat very thoroughly. Then he put it on in front of the long mirror. It was rather too big for him-in fact it nearly covered his eyes, and the effect was very curious.

"Mother," screamed Moomintroll. "Come and look at Father." Moominmamma opened the kitchen door and looked at him with amazement.

"How do I look?" asked Moominpappa.

"It's all right," said Moominmamma. "Yes, you look very handsome in it, but it's just a tiny bit too big."

"Is it better like this?" asked Moominpappa, pushing the hat on to the back of his head.

"Hm," said Moominmamma. "That's smart, too, but I almost think you look more dignified without a hat."

Moominpappa looked at himself in front, behind and from both sides, and then he put the hat on the table with a sigh.

"You're right," he said. "Some people look better without hats."

"Of course, dear," said Moominmamma, kindly. "Now eat up your eggs, children, you need feeding up after living on pine needles all the winter." And she disappeared into the kitchen again.

"But what shall we do with the hat?" asked Sniff. "It's such a fine one."

"Use it as a waste paper basket," said Moominpappa, and thereupon he took himself upstairs to go on writing his life story. (The heavy volume about his stormy youth.)

Snufkin put the hat down on the floor between the table and the kitchen door. "Now you've got a new piece of furniture again," he said, grinning, for Snufkin could never understand why people liked to have things. He was quite happy wearing the old suit he had had since he was born (nobody knows when and where that happened), and the only possession he didn't give away was his mouth-organ.

"If you've finished breakfast we'll go and see how the Snorks are getting on," said Moomintroll. But before going out into the garden he threw his eggshell into the wastepaper basket, for he was (sometimes) a well brought up Moomin.

The dining room was now empty.

In the corner between the table and the kitchen door stood the Hobgoblin's Hat with the eggshell in the bottom. And then something really strange happened. The eggshell began

to change its shape.

(This is what happens, you see. If something lies long enough in the Hobgoblin's Hat it begins to change into something quite different-what that will be you never know beforehand. It was lucky that the hat hadn't fitted Moominpappa because the-Protector-of-all-Small-Beasts knows what woul...

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