

Troll

*By Marilyn Reeves*

There once was a red-headed dwarf named John Trollman, who went by the nickname Troll. When he had achieved his full growth, Troll stood but three feet, nine inches tall, but he was quite husky, and resembled ... well, a troll.

Troll was a bitter man. All he ever really wanted out of life was to be a person of normal height, but that had been denied him, so Troll hated the world and everybody in it. The only person he ever loved was his father, who allowed him to take apart things like bicycles and radios and gadgets and gizmos and then put them back together again. And so long as he kept busy with his hobby, Troll was reasonably content.

Their home was on top of the mountain, just off a steep road that was hemmed in by a rock wall on one side and a sheer drop-off on the other. Near the top, the road made a sharp S-turn, first to the left and then to the right before reaching the concrete retaining wall of the bridge that spanned the chasm.

Troll's father had been driving home one night in the pouring rain and went off the road as he went around that first sharp turn, crashing headlong into the river below. Troll was so upset by his father's death that he decided to take out his anger on the rest of the world.

He built himself a treehouse in one of the tall trees across from the fateful drop-off. Then he constructed a device that would confuse the drivers into going over the edge before they reached the bridge. Each night he entertained himself by listening for the sound of screeching brakes and the inevitable splash that followed, as one doomed vehicle after another hit the water at the bottom of the gorge.

And each morning Troll would scurry down to the bridge to view the tragic scene below. He would whoop and holler with delight as he watched the emergency workers rappel down the steep incline to pull the victims from their mangled vehicles and the giant crane haul the wreckage from the river. No one ever saw him standing there on the top of the bridge.

This terrible trend went on month after month, until one day the body of a pint-sized man with a full red beard was found lying, crushed, on the top of the bridge. Then the accidents stopped happening as suddenly as they had begun.

But it wasn't until five years later that a group of young boys discovered steps nailed to the trunk of a tall tree across the road from the bridge. They climbed up into the vacated roost and found a projector mounted on the windowsill. When they turned it on it put out a very high beam of light that reflected against the retaining wall like a traffic sign.

And in the center of the bright reflected light was a big black arrow directing traffic to turn right ... before they reached the bridge.