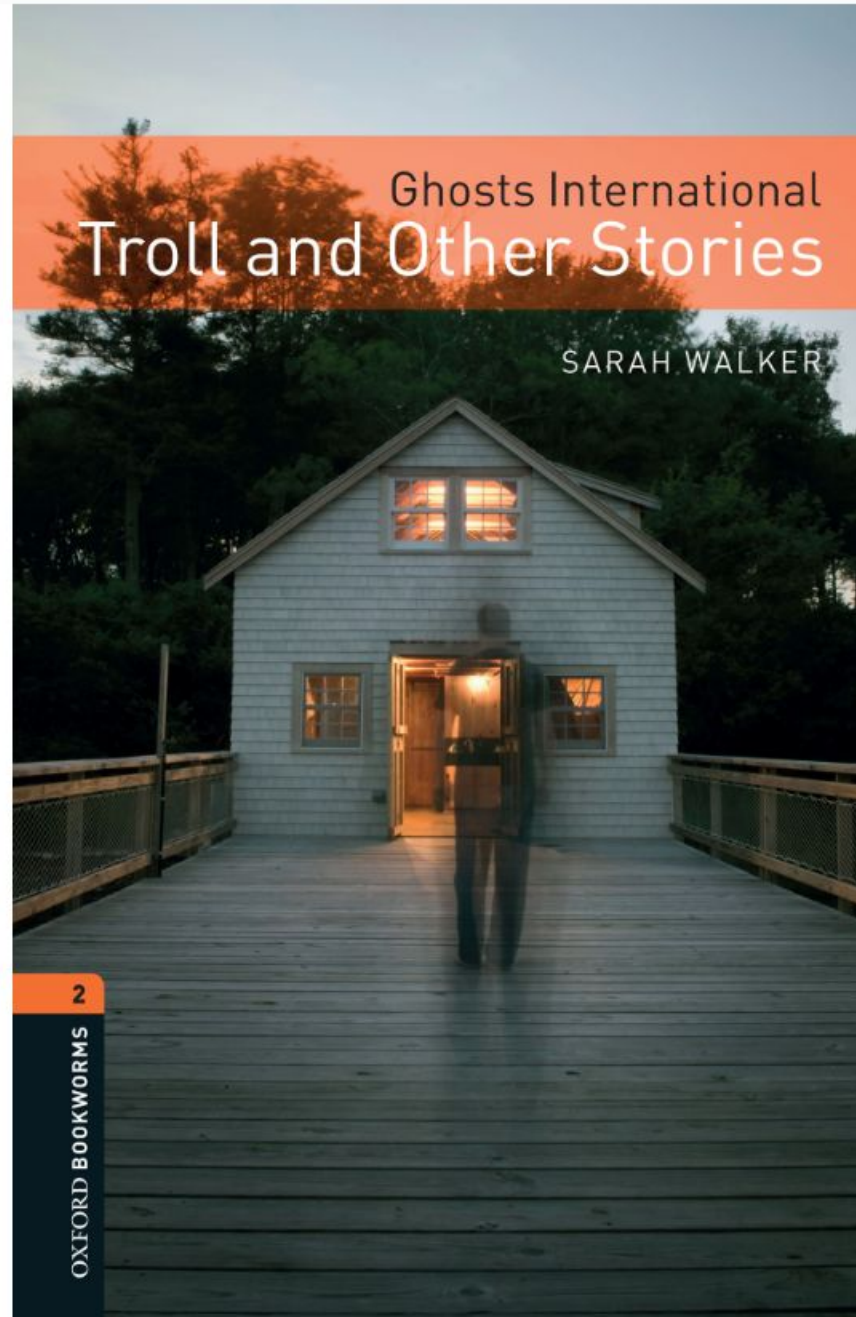


Ghosts International
Troll and Other Stories

SARAH WALKER



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OXFORD BOOKWORMS

Ghosts International
TROLL AND OTHER STORIES

Some people say that they don't believe in ghosts, or monsters, or mysterious happenings of any kind. They laugh, and say that these are just stories for children. It is easy to laugh in daylight, with people around you. But why are there stories about ghosts in every country of the world? Why do people go on telling ghost stories? Can science explain *everything* that happens?

Abdul is a modern young man in Oman, going home for the weekend, with a present of a computer game for his little brother Omar. He will never forget that journey for the rest of his life. In the game called 'scrying' you can see into the future, but some children in England in the 1600s find out too late that it is not a good idea to do this. And a soldier in Asia returns home to his mother after a long war, but there is something not quite right . . .

But we begin with Sonja in Sweden. Everybody has heard stories about the monsters called trolls in Sweden, but Sonja knows the stories are true, because of her grandfather . . .


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Fantasy & Horror

Ghosts International
Troll and Other Stories

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Troll

A story from Sweden



In Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Finland, and Iceland, people tell many different stories about trolls. Trolls are big, ugly creatures, who live in the mountains . . . Or they are small and horrible, and make trouble around the house. Some stories say you can see them, some say you can only feel that a troll is near.

This story comes from a Swedish woman called Sonja. It is a true story, she says, and it really happened to her.

When I was a little girl, many years ago, I lived with my mother and father and grandfather in my grandfather's house. It was an old house with a big garden, which had a lot of fruit trees in it.

My mother and my father both worked all day, so my grandfather took care of me. I loved my grandfather and I followed him everywhere. When he was working, I liked to watch, and I always tried to help.

One sunny morning after breakfast my grandfather went out into the garden and I went with him. He looked at one of the old apple trees, shook his head, then went back into the house. I followed him. He went to his tool cupboard and began to look through his tools.



At the back of the cupboard was a metal saw, for cutting wood. But now the saw was old and broken.

‘Are you going to cut some wood, Grandpa?’ I said. ‘Can I help you?’

‘No, little Sonja,’ Grandpa said. ‘This old saw is



Grandpa put the broken saw into the tree, high up.

broken now. But it can still do a job, and you can help. I’ll need a hammer and some nails too. Please carry the nails for me. I’ll carry the hammer because it’s heavy.’

Grandpa carried the broken saw and the hammer into the garden. I followed him with the nails. I said to myself, ‘I’m helping Grandpa!’

In the garden, Grandpa went to one of the old apple trees. He put the broken saw into the tree, high up. First he made a little cut in the tree, and then pushed the saw hard into the cut. Then he took three nails from me, and hammered them into the tree, around the old saw.

It was a very old tree, and I saw that there were lots of old nails in it.

Grandpa finished. ‘There,’ he said. ‘That’s good. The saw won’t fall out of the tree now.’

I was only six years old, and I did not understand.

‘Grandpa,’ I asked. ‘Why did you do that?’

‘Because of trolls,’ Grandpa said.

I knew that a troll was a kind of monster. People said they were ugly and frightening and dangerous, and that they did bad things. But I did not know what things.

‘Trolls don’t like metal,’ said Grandpa. ‘If you put something metal in a tree, like that old saw, then the trolls will stay away. They will not come into your garden or into your house while the metal is there.’

He touched the tree, with the old nails in it.

‘My father put metal in these trees,’ he said, ‘and my



grandfather did it before him, and his father before that. And I do the same. Young people today don't follow these ways, but I'm teaching you, little Sonja, so you'll know. And that's why we put that old saw in this tree.'

'What will happen if you don't put something metal in a tree?' I asked.

'If you don't do it, then perhaps a troll will come,' said Grandpa. 'If you are lucky, it will not stay. It will just pass through the garden, maybe. But if you are unlucky – very unlucky – the troll will come into your house. If you are really unlucky, the troll will stay. It will sit in your kitchen. You won't see it, but you will know it is there.'

'If a troll comes and sits in the kitchen, what will it do?' I asked.

Grandpa looked very serious.

'A troll does not need to do anything,' he said. 'Just a troll sitting in your house, in your kitchen! Nothing can be right in a house if a troll is there! Nothing can go right in the family! All the good luck, all the happiness goes out of the house when a troll sits in your kitchen. That is terrible enough!'



After a few years, my mother and father and I left my grandfather's house, and moved into a modern house with a little garden of our own. I forgot about trolls. My mother and father never talked about trolls, and nobody put metal in the trees in our garden.

There were two young trees in the garden and between them there was a washing line. On sunny days we put our wet clothes out on the washing line to get dry.

On my grandfather's first visit, he sat in the kitchen with my mother and father, drinking coffee and talking, and looking out of the window at our garden.

It was a beautiful sunny day. There were wet clothes on the washing line, but they did not move because there was no wind. Everything was still in the garden that day.



My grandfather sat in the kitchen, drinking coffee and talking.



I sat in the kitchen and listened to my grandfather and my parents for a while. But the garden looked so beautiful! I decided to go out and play, and I went to the garden door to go out.

Suddenly my grandfather said, 'Sonja, stop!'

I stopped, with my hand on the door.

Grandpa was looking through the window at the garden outside.

'Troll!' he said. His face was white.

In the garden, the sun was shining. There was no wind. No leaves moved on the trees, everything was still.

But the wet clothes on the washing line were moving, all by themselves. They were turning, and turning – this way, and that way . . .

They were tying themselves into knots.



A Gift for Omar *A story from Oman*



All over the world there are stories about meeting strange travellers in lonely places. Who are they? Where have they come from? Where are they going?

This is one of those stories. It happens in Oman, on Route 21, the long road that runs across the lonely hills behind the great Al Hajar mountains.

Oman is a big country, and the roads in Oman are very long. 'Long and empty,' thought Abdul.

He was standing next to his car, by the side of Route 21, the long road that runs from Buraimi to Nizwa. He was waiting for a car to pass by, but the road was empty. There were no houses and no traffic.

Abdul was angry with his car, because it did not go any more. He was angry with himself, because he did not check the car before he left Buraimi. And he was angry with his mobile phone too, because there was no signal. He couldn't use it to phone for help.

Every Wednesday evening, Abdul drove from his office in Buraimi to his family home in Nizwa. He liked to spend the weekend, which in Oman is Thursday and Friday, at home with his family.