

Bukolida

The title 'Bukolida' is rendered in large, three-dimensional letters made of thick, cream-colored yarn. Two knitted ogres, with wild brown hair, large noses, and sharp teeth, are positioned at the top corners. They are holding the letters 'B' and 'a' respectively, as if they are about to eat them. The background of the title section is a warm, golden sunset sky with soft clouds.

Katrin Holm



Once, long ago, there lived an old man and an old woman in their little turf cottage beneath a mountain. They were poor, owning little more than smoke in the chimney and a single cow — Búkolla. They also had a daughter, a young lass, quiet and good-hearted.



She was worth more to them than silver and gold, for she gave them milk through the long dark winter, when snow lay heavy over the home field and the wind beat the walls like an unseen hand.



One morning the old woman went out to the byre with the milking pail in her hand. But when she opened the door, the stall stood empty. Búkolla was gone.



Only the empty rope hung on the wall, and the hay lay untouched. Only a faint trail could be made out in the dew-wet grass outside, as though something had set off toward the mountain while the household slept.



The old woman called for the old man, and the old man called for their daughter. They searched around the farmhouse, down by the stream, along the fence, and out across the home field. But the creature was nowhere to be seen.



“This is a bad business,” said the old man. “If Búkolla isn’t found, we’ll have little left to live on.” The old woman looked at her daughter. Her face was pale, but her voice was steady.



“Go, my girl,” she said. “Go and find her. And when you’ve walked far from the farm, call out loud: Low now, my Búkolla, if you are anywhere alive.” The girl nodded, took up her walking staff, and set off.



She walked first across the home field, then over the moors, where frost still clung in the hollows though the sun had already climbed into the sky. The mountains rose ahead of her, dark and silent.



When she had gone some way from the farm, she stopped, cupped her hands to her mouth, and called: “Low now, my Búkolla, if you are anywhere alive!” She listened. Nothing answered but the wind moving through the grass.



She walked on. Again she called. This time she thought she heard something. Very faint. Very far away. One sad, low moo, as though it came from inside a stone.



The girl ran toward the sound. She climbed a steep slope and scrambled between boulders, coming at last to a dark cave-mouth beneath a black crag.



The girl stepped carefully inside. “Búkolla?” she whispered.
The cow lowed again. But as the rope came loose, a heavy
snore sounded from deeper in the cave — two troll-women lay
sleeping there, one huge, one smaller.



Deep inside the cave she saw her. Búkolla stood tied to a great stone, and beside her stood a little calf. “My Búkolla,” said the girl, and ran to her, untying her as quickly as she could.



Búkolla nudged her gently with her head, as if to say: hurry. The girl led her out of the cave, the calf trotting behind. They had barely come down from the crag when the great troll-woman woke and roared: “Who has taken my cow?”



“What shall we do now, my Búkolla?” the girl called. Búkolla said, low but clear: “Pull a hair from my tail and lay it upon the ground.” In that instant the hair became a wide, roaring river.



The great troll-woman snarled and sent the smaller one running for her father's monstrous ox, blacker than night. It went down to the river and drank, and drank, until the riverbed lay bare again.



The troll-women set off after them once more. The girl heard their footsteps closing in behind her.



“Pull another hair,” said Búkolla, “and lay it on the ground.”
Fire sprang up at once, red and gold, and the heat struck the
troll-women so hard that they had to stop.



But the great troll-woman only laughed and called for the ox again. It came, heavy and soaked from the river, and let loose all the water it had drunk over the flames. The blaze went out.



Now the troll-women were closer than ever before. The girl felt her heart pounding in her chest. “My Búkolla,” she said, “now they will catch us.”



“Pull one more hair,” said Búkolla, “and lay it on the ground.”
A mountain rose up out of the earth, growing taller than the
clouds, and the troll-women vanished on the far side.



But the great troll-woman did not give up. She sent the little troll-woman home for her father's great auger, and began to bore a hole through the mountain. The rock shook. Stones fell.



She grew so eager that she forced herself into the hole before it was wide enough. There she stuck fast, until before long she turned to stone within the mountain. Some say she stands there still.



The girl walked home now with Búkolla and the calf. As she neared the farm, the old woman came out onto the doorstep, and the old man followed behind her.



The old woman wept for joy. The old man laid his hand on his daughter's shoulder and said nothing, for sometimes the greatest thanks are too heavy for words. From that day on, the girl never again forgot to close the byre door.