

Baggedorf

And the Itching Powder Plot

Chapter 1

Baggedorf grunted and wiped the sweat from his wide brow, running a chubby hairy hand beneath his mop of shaggy brown hair. He clambered over a mossy bolder and lumbered through the forest clearing. Once in the cooler shade of the pine trees, he could at last see the lake. The inky water sparkled in the midsummer sun. His bulbous nose twitched and a wide grin revealed a few missing teeth. As child trolls go, he was rather short and slightly chubby. Probably about the same size as your teacher.

On land, trolls can seem rather clumsy, lumbering about, grunting and straining, but in the water they are speedy as otters. It is a little known fact that trolls are gifted swimmers.

With a splash, Baggedorf (dungarees and all) jumped head long into the water. Only his clogs remained on the bank. He whooped and swam out on his back, kicking his feet with delight. He rolled in the water and dived below the surface. The coolness pounded in his ears.

The lake was in the middle of the pine forest and in the middle of the lake was a large flat-topped rock. To him, the rock was his island, and he headed for it straight away at a fairly fast moondip. The moondip is a bit like a doggy paddle but with more movement of the bottom.

Suddenly Baggedorf's powerful troll ears heard a slapping noise. He slowed and trod water, looking around. There on his island sat a human, and with the human sat one of those four-legged creatures they call dogs.

He had been planning to stretch out on the rock in the sun. Now he frowned and scratched his head.

Trolls normally avoid humans and humans rarely see them. Sometimes you can spot a troll out of the corner of your eye, but under closer inspection they have a clever way of looking like a large bolder.

Baggedorf thought for a moment, and eyed the small human carefully. The sun twinkled, reflected in the lake. He was very hot and felt like having some fun today. He smiled to himself. Maybe the human and her dog would like to play.

Fred was lapping up water. Despite the swim out to the rock, he was hot under his shaggy fur. Poppy patted Fred's back absent-mindedly as she trailed her feet in the water.

Poppy was 8 years old and lived with her mum and dad near Birmingham. Every summer she came over to Sweden on a great big ship that her dad called an Ocean Liner. She loved staying with her Grandpa in Sweden, for a start, the meatballs were delicious!

Grandpa lived in a little cottage not far from the lake, just up a winding path through the forest and past the old well. He always talked about trolls, but she had never met one before. On the whole, she got the impression that they were friendly creatures who preferred to be left alone.

When she spotted Baggedorf's head just under the water's surface, she stood up with a start.

"What's that Fred?" she squealed. Fred put his head on one side and whined. She picked up a loose pebble and chucked it towards the moving underwater object.

Baggedorf surfaced, spluttering water and snot running from his nose.

“Oi, that could have hurt!” he shouted, rubbing his head. He wiped his eyes and nose roughly, to see a rather frightened human and an over-excited dog occupying his rock.

“Don’t look so worried,” he chuckled from the water.

Suddenly, he dived into a deep-water handstand. Poppy could now see two enormous hairy troll feet, exactly where Baggledorf’s chubby face had been a second ago. Her face broke into a puzzled but nervous smile.

The troll resurfaced.

“Who are you?” Poppy whispered.

“I,” he said with a grunt, as he clambered out of the water onto the rock, “am Baggledorf Ventulagrogen the Second. Son of the Great Nordeldorf Ventulagrogen, leader of the troll tribes of Skåne and Southern Sweden!”

He loved saying that. It sounded very impressive and had taken many months to learn.

His family were very important in the troll world. His father was a supreme troll tribe King. Once Baggledorf was grown-up, he would begin training to become his father’s successor. But all that seemed a long way off. Trolls live for many hundreds of years and he was only 147, barely half way through his childhood.

So, for now, he was allowed to play in the forest, explore, bark munch and swim.

He stood up, his hands on his ample hips, his hairy chest puffed out beneath his blue dungarees. Water dripped from his drenched clothes. He wiped his nose with the back of his hand and gave Poppy and Fred a grin.

“So, who are you two then?” he enquired.

Fred barked and came over to sniff Baggledorf's dungarees. Poppy looked up at his funny little face and cheeky smile. He was a like a huge hairy kid!

She giggled slightly, then frowned and said seriously, "I'm Poppy and this is Fred."

Baggledorf reached out a great big, hairy hand. Poppy had never shaken hands with a troll before. She gulped and carefully stretched out her tiny white hand. His great paw grabbed most of her lower arm and practically rattled her whole body as he shook.

"Aren't trolls supposed to avoid humans?" she asked, releasing his hand and standing up. She was about as tall as the top of his round tummy.

He chuckled.

"We are not too keen on grown-up humans, but children is children!" he exclaimed.

"Troll children and human children... well, we don't need to follow the grown-ups rules do we?"

He patted Fred.

"So what brings you to my island?" asked the friendly troll.

"Your island?" said Poppy indignantly, forgetting her nerves. "Firstly, it's a rock and secondly I don't believe it's yours!"

She came here every summer and always thought of the rock as her own place.

He looked at her now grumpy face, and drying brown curls.

"Are you hot?" he asked and without waiting for an answer he performed a giant double back-flip into the water, splashing everyone. Poppy laughed.

"Follow me!" he called from the water. He had other much more fun places to show his

new friends than this.

Poppy rarely met other children in the forest, so it was very exciting to have found a new friend. Best of all Baggledorf was not just another child, but a troll too!

She slid back into the water and swam after the splashing coming from his wild moondip. Fred zoomed past the others with his doggy paddle. He shook furiously once on the shore, spraying mud and water everywhere. Then he turned back towards the lake, wagging his tail and barking.

Baggledorf and Poppy waded out of the shallows. Slipping on muddy clogs and yanking at trainers, they were soon ready.

“Want to come and meet a friend of mine?” he asked.

Poppy and Fred were always ready for an adventure.

“Alright then,” she said bravely, wiping at her dripping shorts and t-shirt, and bedraggled curls. Fred darted off ahead and she hurried along trying to match Baggledorf’s slow but enormous strides.

Chapter 2

Baggedorf, Poppy and Fred walked down the path passed Grandpa's cottage and disappeared amongst the pines. A mile or so later, the forest ended and below the unbroken blue sky was a huge hole in the ground. It looked like an enormous valley carved out of the forest floor. Poppy could see two rock-faces a great distance apart. Between them, there was a dark deep lake stretching as far as you could see.

"This is the old quarry," Baggedorf explained. Poppy's freckled forehead crumpled into a slight frown.

Baggedorf and Poppy walked to the edge. They lay on their tummies, with their heads hanging over the edge.

Poppy gulped. A wind chilled her face. She stared down into the quarry's depths. She had never seen anything so enormous. You could probably stack 10 buses on top of each other and still not fill it.

"No one knows how deep the quarry is," Baggedorf explained, "the water fills most of it and no one has ever swum to the bottom."

He sighed and flicked a stone over the edge. It tumbled forever and finally hit the water, too far below to hear the splash.

"Of course," he continued quietly, "one of my classmates, Flapper, tried to swim to the bottom for a bet. We saved him, but he never went near water again..."

Baggedorf's voiced trailed off thoughtfully. She gulped, looking down to the watery depths.

Then Poppy spotted some rickety steps on the other side. The steps led down to a wide rock ledge, about half way up the quarry face. It was a big ledge with a couple of bushes and a little wooden shack.

“What’s that?” she asked, pointing at the ledge.

“That’s where we’re going,” he said excitedly, “my friend lives there. Humans think it’s just an old worker’s hut, but it’s not.”

They edged themselves back onto the dusty path and set off around the quarry.

Fred followed, stopping occasionally for a sniff and a wee, then sprinting to catch up.

Poppy still never really understood how Fred could wee so often!

At the far side of the quarry, Baggledorf picked Fred up and carried him under one gigantic arm. Together they descended the worn-out steps to the shack. Poppy followed carefully. The steep, wooden steps were nailed to the quarry rock face. You could catch glimpses of the water far below in the cracks in the wood. Whenever she looked down, her tummy felt funny.

“Keep your eyes up.” advised Baggledorf seeing Poppy pale.

It was a long climb down to the hut.

Fred was licking Baggledorf’s face, making him laugh. He had always thought dogs were odd creatures, but now he was beginning to see why humans liked them so much. Dogs were really nice, just a bit smelly.

As they reached the rock ledge, a gruff voiced shouted, “Who’s there?”

“Hi George, it’s only me.”

Standing outside the hut, Poppy and Baggledorf craned their necks backwards to look up at his enormous friend.

George was a gigantic troll. He was much older than Baggledorf. At the last guess, they reckoned he was 572 years old. The old troll heaved himself out of his front door and grinned at his visitors. He had a long white beard, shaggy white hair and a very round tummy.

“Heh, heh,” grinned George, as he looked down at Poppy, “Hello there my little human.”

George lived at the quarry all alone and loved having guests. He smiled at Poppy and patted her on the back.

Nervously twisting her hair round a finger and hovering on the doorstep to George’s shack, she gazed up at the friendly but enormous face.

“Come in,” he invited softly and turned back inside.

“My guess is that you’ve come here for a spot of flying eh?”

Poppy shot a confused look at Baggledorf. He giggled, his chubby cheeks wobbling as he chortled.

Her initial fright at meeting such a big troll was turning into curiosity.

“Hmm,” continued George, “It’s a lovely day to take a cloud out in the quarry.”

“What do you mean? How do you fly clouds?” Poppy blurted out, stepping carefully over the high threshold.

The two trolls laughed with glee and Fred barked.

The inside of the hut was very comfortable. Next to the fireplace there was a rug and

the most enormous armchair she had ever seen. George sat down in it with a groan. He almost disappeared into the piles of brightly coloured cushions.

“Ahhh that’s better,” he sighed as he lit a long pipe.

Baggledorf busied himself in a corner cupboard. He filled a bowl with water for Fred, who lapped noisily, flicking water and spit onto the floor.

George puffed slowly on his pipe. Suddenly with one big blow a large cloud of smoke popped out of the end. The cloud hovered in the air, clearly waiting for something.

Whooping, Baggledorf clattered out of the kitchen corner. He leapt onto the cloud and knelt down. With his arms hanging low on each side of the cloud, he began to paddle.

Poppy watched with amazement as he circled her, flying the cloud just above her head. He was laughing and shouting.

“I love riding on George’s clouds. Isn’t he clever?” he squealed.

The old troll puffed on his pipe again and produced another slightly smaller cloud. It hovered obediently at Poppy’s feet.

“Go on, hop on,” Baggledorf shouted.

He was out of breath with all his laughing.

She nervously stepped onto the cloud, expecting her foot to plunge through. But the cloud felt soft and firm, like a floating marshmallow. She comfortably sank onto her knees, touched the soft cotton folds of the cloud, and looked up at her fellow cloud flyer.

“So... paddle!” he yelled from his cloud at the ceiling.

She dropped her arms to each side of the cloud and paddled furiously. The cloud took

off at an amazing pace, then smacked into the opposite wall of the hut. Poppy and the cloud lay in a pile on the floor. Fred barked, then ran over to lick her dismayed little face.

George slowly pulled himself up from his chair. He was chuckling to himself.

“Hmm, a quick lesson is in order, I believe,” he said.

He helped the dazed Poppy upright and straightened out the cloud.

She pulled herself back into a kneeling position on the soft folds. George explained how paddling faster or slower with your hands made the cloud move at different speeds. He showed how a left-hand only paddle turned the cloud left and a right-hand only paddle turned it right. Leaning forward made it accelerate. Leaning back, with a tug on the front of the cloud, acted as a brake. Cloud control seemed pretty easy.

Within minutes she had joined Baggledorf. They soared around the hut in fits of giggles. Fred barked wildly on the floor below. One moment he was barking up towards the clouds. The next he was chasing his tail round and round in circles. The poor dog had almost gone mad with excitement.

George opened the door and Baggledorf shouted, “Follow me!”

Before Poppy knew it, she was out the door and following him down the quarry on her cloud. The warm summer air rushed through her hair. Her tummy lurched as the cloud surged forward, like she was on a roller coaster at the fair.

She sped off the rock ledge where George lived, with only a fluffy cloud between her and the great drop into the gigantic quarry below. She gulped and clung to the cloud. Baggledorf was ahead of her, diving his cloud towards the water.

Poppy slowed her cloud, hovering in the centre of the cavernous rock gully. A flock of forest birds flew past her twittering. She was sure they were laughing at her crumpled face and white knuckles.

The dark quarry waters sparkled in the afternoon sun. Baggledorf was far ahead of her now, just a little dot way down below, hovering above the water.

Poppy took a deep breath and lent forward. As the cloud got up speed, she pushed lightly into its candy floss folds and directed it down. The cloud went faster and faster. She lent to the left, taking a sharp bend to catch up with Baggledorf. Her little cloud turned almost on its side to take the corner and she slid off, grabbing a fold just in time. The cloud continued to turn left and down, spiralling faster and faster to the water below.

“Eeeeeek” she screamed, holding on until her fists ached.

“Baggledorf!!!” she screeched.

Then out of nowhere came a great big troll-hand that pulled her back onto the cloud. Baggledorf had spotted his friend in trouble and raced to the rescue. He had never flown so fast.

Trembling, she lay forward on her cloud, burying her face into its soft folds. After several minutes, she finally recovered her breath and sat up again.

“You need to take the corners carefully,” said Baggledorf with a wink.

Baggledorf towed Poppy’s cloud gently down until they hovered steadily, just above the quarry lake.

“Come on silly,” he chuckled, looking at her nervous face. She felt like she might cry.

“That was just beginner's nerves, you'll be fine now.”

He dipped his cloud, gently flicking water at Poppy with his free hand. She slowly steered her cloud forward, a smile gradually spreading over her face. She felt more confident now they had reached the bottom. The water was just below and seemed bluer in the bright sunshine. The quarry sides loomed above to each side.

Grandpa always said you should jump straight back on your bike the moment you fall off, and she decided it was probably the best way to deal with a cloud accident too.

Baggedorf showed Poppy some of his cloud tricks. He did a marvellous double loop-the-loop, forward then backwards. She decided to try that next time. Instead she lay back, snuggling comfortably into her hovering cloud, to watch her friend's acrobatic display.

Tired of loop the loops, Baggedorf formed two horns on the front of his cloud. Then jumping wildly on his bum, his cloud started to bounce off the water, each bounce taking him higher into the air. As he whizzed skyward, he ripped a piece of cloud, moulded it into a ball and threw it at Poppy.

Lazing around on her cloud watching him bounce, she did not notice the cloud-ball in time. It smashed into fluffy pieces all over her hair and clothes. Laughing, she started to launch cloud-balls at her friend. He was rather a hard target; a mad, bouncing troll with wind-swept hair, boggley eyes and a massive grin! Eventually, she landed a large cloud-ball right in the middle of his chubby face.

Then he started a full cloud-attack, preparing fluffy cannon balls to launch from a giant gun that he had moulded to the rear of his bouncing cloud. Poppy could not compete and sped away, Baggedorf in hot pursuit, launching cloud-balls as he flew.

An hour or so later, the two tired cloud fliers brought their clouds into land at George's hut. They jumped off and sat down to cold apple juice at George's table. The two clouds vanished with a pop.

"Thank you so much," said Poppy, beaming at her two new wonderful friends.

"I expect it's time for you two to be off home," said George softly.

"Take care of your new friend, Baggledorf. You know the rules about humans," warned George quietly to Baggledorf, as Poppy headed to the door with Fred.

"Don't worry." he smiled, patting George's enormous elbow.

The old troll turned slowly towards the window. The sun was low in the sky.

Poppy yawned as she waved goodbye. Baggledorf, Fred and Poppy made their way back up the rickety steps, through the forest and past the well, to the bottom of Grandpa's steps.

Poppy had been marching ahead to get home. She turned to say goodbye, but Baggledorf had gone, vanished between the boulders and trees in the fading light.

Grandpa was sitting on the veranda as usual. He was waiting for them to return. He patted Fred on the head.

"I've made meatballs for tea," he said with a smile, "Did you have fun today?"

Poppy smiled and told him all about the lake and the quarry. She mentioned Baggledorf and Grandpa just smiled. She was not completely sure he believed her.

Not long after their meatball supper, Poppy fell fast asleep. Fred curled up at the end of her bed and Grandpa snoozed by the fire.

Chapter 3

The clock struck midnight. Poppy woke with a start.

There it was again, a soft tapping on her windowpane. Her heart was beating fast, she was frozen to the spot in her warm bed. She peered into the gloom. Her bedroom was dark, apart from a shaft of moonlight through the curtains.

Poppy lay still, breathing quickly and quietly. Minutes passed. I must have dreamt the tapping she hoped. Then, there it was again, that rustling and tapping outside her window.

Tap, tap... tap, tap...

Her mouth was dry.

Thinking for a moment, she smiled to herself. Maybe it was Baggledorf on a night-time expedition. Her fear vanished and she swung her legs out of bed. The floorboards felt cold as she tiptoed to the window. Poppy peaked between her red and white checked curtains, hoping to spot her troll friend.

The clearing outside the cottage was empty. Only the bucket on the well creaked in the night breeze. The full moon filled the clearing with an eery silver light. Poppy scanned the forest for any sign of movement, and glimpsed a silhouette heading towards the trees away from the cottage. It was a troll at the edge of the forest. Squinting, she could see more movement in the bushes. She gasped. There were more trolls deep in the trees behind.

“Baggledorf?” she whispered, hoping it was her friend, but these trolls looked bigger and somehow less friendly. Poppy watched as the group tiptoed noisily away, dropping

what looked like sweet wrappers as they went.

She watched as the figures melted into the night.

A shiver ran down her spine. She waited by the window a while to see if they came back, then crept back to bed. Tucked up under her covers, she lay awake wondering who was sneaking round in the forest so late at night. Apart from Baggledorf she had never seen trolls so near to Grandpa's cottage before.

The clock ticked. Her bed was cosy and warm. Grandpa's fire glowed beneath her bedroom door. Finally, even the trolls could not keep her eyes from closing.