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Trolls At Teatime

by J. M. R. Harrison

Five trolls came to tea
and stayed for dinner.
when I went to bed
I found them in my room,
snoring.

The windowpanes rattled.
I spent an uncomfortable night
on the sofa.

Within a week, I decided
I had to move
but at my new place
I found one hanging pictures
and another unpacking silverware.

I went into the kitchen and bluntly asked,
"What would it take
"to get you to go home at last?"

"Don't worry, dear," she said,
her smile a jagged toothed grimace,
on tombstone-heavy hand patting my arm,
"You may stay as long as you like."

The Unexplained Plague Of Laryngitis Among The Mermaids

by

J. M. R. Harrison

The palsied, blind fisherman whose hut this once was
claimed only the mermaids singing made bearable the grief:
never again to watch sunsets, ships under sail,
the proud, swaying walk of the firm breasted women,
the nimble, half-naked children on the shore mending nets,
the night sky splattered with stars and the full moon rising
with stately grace over the turbulent sea. He died smiling.
But now I wake in terror in the night, flailing in the bed,
straining to hear the familiar slap of the waves on the shore.
The unexplained plague of laryngitis among the mermaids
has spread to the seabirds. Once strident, now they dive and soar
and quarrel over fish heads with a mute, fierce concentration.
Hourly sounds vanish; the storm wind dwindles to sigh.
I fear the problem goes deeper than speech, beyond mere silence.
I fear meaning is being drained for the world,
sense lost dropwise like juice from a squeezed orange,

and the rind case away to attract ants and dry in the sun.
I fear I and all men will be struck dumb and stumbling,
bereft of name and memory in a lightless, soundless voice,
or worse, left to wander locked in a manic leering psychosis.

I fear . .

