



CHAPTER 1

About a bark boat and a volcano

Moominmamma was sitting on the front steps in the sun, rigging a model bark schooner.

“One big sail on the mainmast, and one on the foremast, and several small three-cornered ones to the bowsprit, if I remember rightly,” she thought.

The rudder was a ticklish job, and the hold an odder one. Moominmamma had cut a tiny bark hatch, and when she laid it on, it fitted snugly and neatly over the hold.

“Just in case of a hurricane,” she said to herself with a happy sigh.

By her side on the steps, knees under chin, sat the Mymlbe’s daughter, looking on. She saw

Moominmamma next tack the stays with small glass-headed pins, each of a different color. The mastheads were already flying bright red pennants.

“For whom is it?” asked the Mymble’s daughter respectfully.

“For Moomintroll,” replied his mamma, and searched her workbasket for something for an anchor cable.

“Don’t push me about!” cried a small voice from the basket.

“Dear me,” said Moominmamma, “here’s your little sister in my workbasket again! She’s going to hurt herself on the pins and needles one day.”

“My!” said the Mymble’s daughter menacingly and tried to pull her sister out of a skein of wool. “Come out at once!”

But Little My managed to crawl deeper into the wool, where she disappeared completely.

“Such a nuisance she turned out so very small,” complained the Mymble’s daughter. “I never know where to look for her. Couldn’t you make a bark boat for her, too? She could sail in the water barrel, and I’d always know where she is.”

Moominmamma laughed and looked in her handbag for another piece of bark.

“Do you think this would hold Little My?” she asked.

“Certainly,” said the Mymble’s daughter. “But you’ll have to make a small life belt as well.”

“May I cut up your knitting ball?” shouted Little My from the sewing-basket.

“By all means,” replied Moominmamma. She was admiring her schooner and wondered if she had forgotten anything. As she sat holding it in her paw a big black flake of soot came floating down and landed amidships on the deck.

“Ugh,” said Moominmamma and blew it away. Immediately another flake landed on her nose. Suddenly the air was full of soot.

Moominmamma rose with a sigh.

“So very annoying, this volcano,” she remarked.

“Volcano?” asked Little My, and thrust an interested head out of the wool.

“Yes, it’s a mountain not so very far from here, and all of a sudden it’s begun spitting fire and smoke over the whole valley,” explained Moominmamma. “And soot. It’s always kept quiet and good ever since I married. And now, after all these years, exactly when I’ve finished my washing, it has to sneeze once again and blacken all the things I hung out.”

“Everybody’s burning up!” shouted Little My happily. “And everybody’s houses and gardens and playthings and little sisters and their playthings!”

“Fiddlesticks,” said Moominmamma genially



and whisked away another speck of soot from her nose.

Then she went off to look for Moomintroll.

Under the slope, a little to the right of Moominpappa's hammock tree, was a large pond of clear, brown water. The Mymble's daughter always insisted that it had no bottom in the middle. Perhaps she was right. Around the edges, broad and shining leaves grew for dragonflies and skimming-beetles to rest on, and below the surface spidery creatures used to row wrigglingly along, trying to look important. Further down, the pond-frog's eyes glinted like gold, and sometimes you could catch a quick glimpse of her mysterious relatives that lived deep down in the mud.

Moomintroll was lying in his customary place (or one of his places), curled up on the green-and-yellow moss with his tail carefully tucked in under him.

He looked gravely and contentedly down into the water while he listened to the rustle of wings and the drowsy buzz of bees around him.

"It's for me," he thought. "I'm sure it's for me. She always makes the first bark boat of the summer for the one she likes most. Then she muddles it all away a little, because she doesn't want anybody to feel hurt. If that water-spider goes crawling eastwards, there'll be no dinghy. If it goes westwards, she's made a dinghy so small that you hardly dare take it in your paw."



The spider crawled off eastward, and tears welled up in Moomintroll's eyes.

At that moment there was a rustling in the grass, and his mother thrust out her head between the tufts.

"Hello," she said. "I've got something for you."

She bent down and floated the schooner with great care. It balanced beautifully over its own reflection and started away on the port tack as if manned by old salts.

Moomintroll saw at a glance that she had forgotten the dinghy.

He rubbed his nose friendlily against hers (it feels like stroking your face against white velvet) and said: "It's the nicest you've ever made."

They sat side by side in the moss and watched the schooner sail across the pond and land at the other shore beside a large leaf.

Over at the house the Mymble's daughter was shouting for her little sister. "My! My!" she yelled. "Horrible little menace! My-y-y! Come home at once so I can pull your hair!"

"She's hid somewhere again," said Moomintroll. "Remember that time we found her in your bag?"

Moominmamma nodded. She was dipping her nose in the water and looking at the bottom.

"There's a nice gleam down there," she said.

"It's your golden bracelet," said Moomintroll. "And the Snork Maiden's necklace. Good idea, isn't it?"

"Splendid," said his mother. "We'll always keep our bangles in brown pond water in the future. They're so much more beautiful that way."

On the front steps of Moominhouse stood the Mymble's daughter, nearly breaking her voice with yelling. Little My sat quietly in one of her numberless hideouts, just as her sister knew.

"She'd use some kind of bait instead, if she were wise," thought Little My. "Honey, for instance. And then beat me up when I came."



“Mymble,” said Moominpappa from his rocking-chair. “If you keep shouting like that she’ll never come.”

“It’s for my conscience’s sake,” explained the Mymble’s daughter a little conceitedly. “It hurts me more than her. When Mother went away she said to me: ‘Now I’m leaving your little sister in your care, and if you can’t bring her up nobody can, because I’ve given up.’”

“I see,” said Moominpappa. “Then please yell all you want to, if it takes a weight off your mind.” He reached out for a piece of cake from the luncheon table, looked around him carefully, and dipped it in the cream jug.

The verandah table was laid for five. The sixth plate was under it, because the Mymble’s daughter declared that she felt more independent there.

My’s plate, of course, was very small, and it was

placed in the shadow of the flower vase in the middle of the table.

Now Moominmamma came galloping up the garden path.

“There’s no hurry, dear,” said Moominpappa. “We had a snack in the pantry.”

Moominmamma stopped to look at the luncheon table. The cloth was speckled over with soot.

“Oh, dear me,” she said. “What a terribly hot and sooty day. Volcanoes are such a nuisance.”

“If it only weren’t quite so far away,” said Moominpappa. “Then one could find a paperweight of real lava,” he added longingly.

It really was a hot day.

Moomintroll had remained lying in his place by the pond, looking up at the sky, which had turned sparkling white like a sheet of silver. He could hear the seagulls squawking to each other down by the seashore.

“There’s a thunderstorm coming,” Moomintroll thought sleepily and rose to his feet from the moss. And as always when there was a change in the weather, dusk, or a strange light in the sky, he noticed that he was longing for Snufkin.

Snufkin was his best friend. Of course, he also liked the Snork Maiden a lot, but still it can never be quite the same with a girl.

Snufkin was a calm person who knew an immense lot of things but never talked about them unnecessarily. Only now and again he told a little about

his travels, and that made one rather proud, as if Snufkin had made one a member of a secret society. Moomintroll started his winter sleep with the others when the first snow fell. But Snufkin always wandered off to the South and returned to Moominvalley in the springtime.

This spring he hadn't come back!

Moomintroll had begun waiting for him as soon as he awoke, even if he didn't tell the others. When the birds began to wing their way high over the valley, and even the snow on the northern slopes had melted, he became impatient. Never before had Snufkin been so late. And then summer came, and long grass grew all over Snufkin's camping place by the river, as if no one had ever lived there.

Moomintroll waited still, but not so eagerly any more, just reproachfully and a little tiredly.

The Snork Maiden had brought up the topic once at the dinner table.

"How late Snufkin is this year," she said.

"Who knows, perhaps he won't come at all," said the Mymble's daughter.



“I’m sure the Groke’s got him!” cried Little My. “Or he’s fallen down a hole and gone to pieces!”

“Hush, dear,” said Moominmamma hastily. “You know that Snufkin always comes out on top.”

“But still,” Moomintroll reflected on his quiet walk along the river. “There ARE Grokes and policemen. And abysses to fall in. And it happens that people freeze to death, and blow up in the air, and fall in the sea, and catch herring-bones in their throats, and a lot of other things.

“The big world is dangerous. Where there’s no one to know one and no one to know what one likes and what one’s afraid of. And that’s where Snufkin’s walking along now in his old green hat . . . And there’s the Park Keeper who is his great enemy. A terrible, terrible enemy . . .”

Moomintroll stopped on the bridge and stared bleakly down at the water. At that moment a paw touched him lightly on the shoulder. Moomintroll turned with quite a jump.

“Oh, it’s you,” he said.

“I don’t know what to do,” said the Snork Maiden, giving him an imploring look under her fringe.

She wore a wreath of violets around her ears and had felt bored since morning.

Moomintroll made a friendly and slightly pre-occupied sound.

“Let’s play,” said the Snork Maiden. “Let’s play that I’m a wondrous beauty who gets kidnapped by you.”

“I really don’t know if I’m in the mood for it,” replied Moomintroll.

The Snork Maiden drooped her ears, and he hastily brushed his nose against hers and said: “There’s no need to imagine that you’re a wondrous beauty, because that’s what you are. Perhaps I’ll feel like kidnapping you tomorrow instead.”

The June day passed, and dusk was falling, but the weather remained just as warm.

The air was almost scorchingly dry and full of swirling soot, and the whole Moomin family drooped and became dull and silent and unsociable. Finally Moominmamma had an idea and resolved that everybody was to sleep out in the garden that night. She made up their beds in nice places, and by every bed she placed a little lamp so that nobody would feel lonely.

Moomintroll and the Snork Maiden curled up beneath the jasmines. But they couldn’t sleep.

It was no ordinary night. It was silent in an uncanny way.

“It’s so warm,” complained the Snork Maiden. “I keep tossing and turning, and the sheet’s horrible, and soon I’ll have to start thinking about unpleasant things!”

“Same here,” said Moomintroll.

He sat up and looked around him in the garden. The others seemed to be asleep, and the lamps were burning quietly by the beds.