

Baggajazz

When a greedy princess hikes the taxes for family of toll bridge trolls, plunging them into poverty, the son troll is determined to find an alternative way to make more money - that's jazz...

DRAFT #x
© December 2021

Email:

FADE IN

EXT. FAERFOLK FOREST — DAY

The tops of the trees sway in the fresh spring breeze. The bright green leaves rustle softly.

THUMP-THUMP as strong wings beat the air.

POE (a raven) glides above the treeline, his black feathers glistening in the sunshine.

EXT. FAERFOLK LANDSCAPE — CONTINUOUS

Poe passes over a small pond ringed by weeping willows and dotted with lily pads in bloom.

A small pink frog, snoozing on a lily pad, opens his eyes wide as a raven-shaped shadow passes over him. He gulps once and leaps into the clear water.

Poe follows a stream that feeds into the pond, tracing its course upstream. The forest gradually gives way to rolling green hills.

A bridge made of pale grey stones comes into view.

It's wide enough to allow one horse and cart to rumble over at a time. For now, the bridge is quiet and empty.

EXT. STONE BRIDGE — DAY

Two greyish-green trolls (BORRARORR, an elderly troll, and his teenage son BAGGA) rest in the shade under the bridge.

Poe lands gracefully on a log between a snoring Borrarorr and Bagga, who's unrolled a leather scroll, tracing over the runes with his long, thin fingers.

BAGGA
(very quietly)
Hark. Grr. Argh.
(beat)
Hey Poe.

He tosses a morsel of fish to the raven.

BAGGA (CONT'D)
Must be nearly time, huh?

Poe swallows the fish and nods.

POE
Caw!
Awake from your slumbering doze
(MORE)

POE (cont'd)

Night draws near, the markets close.
The human folk, their carts they
load,
Will rumble soon along your road
Caw!

Borrarorr flutters his eyelids, wiping the sleep from his softball-sized eyes with long fingers, careful not to scratch himself with his sharp claws.

He sits up slowly. Picking up a small stick, he wiggles the tip between the sharp teeth jutting from his lower jaw.

After a moment, he frees a fish bone, which lands on the ground next to Poe, who eyes it curiously.

Borrarorr sees Bagga with a scroll in front of him.

BORRARORR

You been studying again, Bagga? You
musta memorized the script by now.

BAGGA

It's my, my, my first time as the
toll, toll, toll-taker. I don't wanna
forget my lines.

Borrarorr starts to stand up, but gasps in pain. Bagga jumps up quickly and helps him.

BORRARORR

It's okay to improvise, you know? You
should trust your instincts more.

BAGGA

I prefer to stick, to stick to the
script. I don't wanna mess up.

Borrarorr places a hand on Bagga's shoulder, leaning his head toward him, until their noses touch.

BORRARORR

Son, if you're not willing to risk
the unusual, you'll always have to
settle for the ordinary.

Bagga nods, then retrieves his script, tucking it into his leather satchel.

EXT. STONE BRIDGE — DAY

RUT-A-TUT-TUT the wooden wheels of a covered cart, pulled by a black horse, rumble along the road as it approaches the east side of the bridge.

Bagga crawls swiftly up the side of the bridge, finding purchase in the nooks and crannies in the stone, clinging like a lizard. He stays out of sight of the human folk, waiting until the horse's hooves clip-clop on the stone bridge.

When he hears the clopping, he leaps over the parapet, shaking the roadway with his forceful landing.

He bares his teeth and wiggles his spidery fingers at the horse and cart-driver.

Borrororr watches quietly from the west side of the bridge.

BAGGA
(deep growling)
Hark! Who, who goes there?

The DRIVER reigns in the horse and swivels round to tap the top of the covered cart with his driving whip.

DRIVER
We've arrived.

A rustling inside the cart before a WOMAN replies.

WOMAN
Just play along for a few minutes.

The driver turns back to face Bagga.

BAGGA
Grr. Argh. Grr.

DRIVER
We are but simple folk, on the way
back from the market.

BAGGA
We trolls patrol this, uh, bridge in
the name of the King. Long live King,
King, King Edric! Three gold coins is
the, the toll you must pay, to the
the trolls who patrol this pathway.

The door to the cart opens, and a woman in a plum, empire-waist gown, steps down onto the dusty roadway. Her amethyst necklace and matching earrings catch the afternoon sun.

WOMAN
And what if I don't?

Bagga glances back at his father, who nods back.

BAGGA

Uh, we shall, uh eat you. Rend your,
your flesh from your, your bones and
crack them like, ah, kindling.

(beat)

Grr. Argh. Grr.

WOMAN

Hmm. I'm not convinced that you
would. You don't really seem

(beat)

committed to this role.

Bagga looks uncertainly at his father.

As the woman strides toward Bagga, Borrarorr limps across
the bridge to stand by his son's side, then opens his mouth
wide.

BORRARORR

ROOOOOOOAAAAARRRRR!

The horse whinnies and rears up, and the skirts of the
woman's dress blow back from the gust of Borrarorr's bellow.

She smooths a strand of blonde hair that's escaped from her
elaborate hairdo.

WOMAN

At least that's more convincing.

(beat)

While your roar is loud, I wonder if
it's been profitable? I think threats
are so, last century, you know?

Borrarorr narrows his eyes. Bagga's lower jaw juts out like
a wonky shelf.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

You don't recognise me? I'm Princess
Thalia, King Edric's daughter and the
next ruler of the Kingdom of the
Faerfolk.

Borrarorr and Bagga's eyes widen, then they bow deeply.
Borrarorr's bones creak as he straightens up. He opens his
arms.

BORRARORR

Your highness, it's an honour to meet
you. I'm Borrarorr and this is my son
Bagga. Our family has been serving
the kingdom for many centuries,
taking tolls at this bridge.

PRINCESS THALIA

But you haven't been taking many tolls lately. Your last tribute was nearly half of what it used to be.

BORRARORR

That's true, but, fewer people are travelling this road.

PRINCESS THALIA

That's because you're boring, a real snooze fest. The thrill of extortionist trolls has long lost its lustre. Do you know what Lackaknack is doing now?

Borrororr shakes his head.

PRINCESS THALIA (CONT'D)

He set up a roadside concession on his bridge, selling ale and grilled boar. And Broodamood is putting on flash theatre productions, telling the story of Onyx in only seven minutes!

(beat)

And you're still stuck in the last century, roaring and harking, and half-heartedly grr-ing. You're going to have to come up with something new, something that really captures attention, otherwise I'll have to give this bridge to another, more profitable, troll tribe.

BORRARORR

Please, I beg you, don't give our bridge away! We have nowhere else to go. No other livelihood. Our family will starve!

Purple tears gather at the corner of Borrororr's eyes, before spilling onto his cheeks.

Bagga reaches out to touch his father's arm.

PRINCESS THALIA

I'll be back in three and thirty days. You had best find new ways to make gold by then, or you can kiss your precious bridge bye-bye.

POE

Caw!

A royal decree, change your ways
In the space of thirty-three days

(MORE)

POE (cont'd)
 The countdown starts, time to begin
 To reveal new truths from within
 Caw!

EXT. SMALL MEADOW WITH A DILAPIDATED HUT — EVENING

Poe gathers white pebbles in his beak and places them along the windowsill of the hut.

There are thirty-two white pebbles, and one black.

Once he finishes, he hops into the hut through the open window.

INT. HUT — NIGHT

Borrarorr, his wife KLAIRADAIR, and Bagga sit around a rough wooden table, a fire crackles in the hearth.

Bagga stirs his bowl of gruel half-heartedly, eyes downcast.

BAGGA
 It's my, my, my fault. I'm sorry I
 didn't, I didn't impress the
 Princess, Pop.

BORRARORR
 (deep sigh)
 Times are changing and we need to
 change with them. But the only thing
 I know how to teach is roaring, so
 what good am I?

KLAIRADAIR
 What's that thing you always say,
 about trying something new?

BORRARORR
 (smiling reluctantly)
 If you're not willing to risk the
 unusual
 (beat)
 you'll always have to settle for the
 ordinary.

KLAIRADAIR
 (pounds table)
 And we are far from ordinary! What we
 need to do, is figure out what the
 humans like.
 (beat)
 In thirty-three days.

The family sits in silence for several moments, staring at different corners in the hut. Finally, Bagga speaks.

BAGGA

I know what we, we could do! We go,
go into town, and see what, what
entertains the humans. Then we can
learn how to do, to do it ourselves,
and try, try it out on the bridge.

MONTAGE OF THE FAMILY WATCHING HUMAN ACTIVITIES IN TOWN AND
THEN PERFORMING ON THE BRIDGE

-- In Town: family sees a jester making balloon animals for
a children's party.

-- On Bridge: human children run in terror as broken pieces
of balloon hang from Bagga's mouth and claws.

-- In Town: family goes to the ballet.

-- On Bridge: humans pelt the family with rotten fruit,
staining their white tutus and tights.

-- At Hut: Poe removes a white pebble from the windowsill.
Seventeen days remain.

-- In Town: family goes to the opera.

-- On Bridge: humans cover their ears in pain, and the glass
and mirrors in their carts shatter as Klairadair sings.

-- In Town: family watches an artist sketch caricatures of
people.

-- On Bridge: humans shriek in horror at Borrarorr's hideous
sketches before throwing the easel and canvases over the
bridge, into the stream.

-- At Hut: Poe removes a white pebble from the windowsill.
Seven days remain.

INT. HUT — DAY

Klairadair removes the lid of an earthenware bowl and looks
inside. The vessel is nearly empty, only a handful of grains
at the bottom.

She opens cupboards, they're bare.

She removes a silver pin from her vest and tucks it in her
pocket.

EXT. TOWN — DAY

The family walks by a TOWN CRIER.

TOWN CRIER

In other news, the Stuckamuck and Bankatank troll tribes have been evicted from their bridges for failing to pay sufficient tribute. Princess Thalia...

(his voice fades away)

The family exchanges defeated looks, then trudges down a cobblestone street, heads bent toward the ground, Borrarorr's cane clicking against the road.

They reach a town square with market stalls and a stage.

Klairadair stops at a stall selling jewellery, takes the pin out of her pocket, and shows it to the rotund, human shopkeeper ORIN who wears a rich burgundy cloak over a green velvet suit.

KLAIRADAIR

How much?

Orin looks at the trinket disdainfully.

ORIN

I'd have to melt it down. Not much silver in it. Maybe two Forbells' worth.

MUSIC plays, somewhat discordant, but somehow enticing.

BORRARORR

Klaira, you can't sell your family crest!

Bagga's head snaps up, and he tilts it to better hear the sound.

KLAIRADAIR

We can't eat it, can we? So best to--

BAGGA

Do you, you hear that?

On the stage three humans play jazz music.

DAZZ (Male, 23) plays a harp, the ostrich feather in his cap bouncing as he plucks.

MAZZ (Female, 27) blows into a bagpipe that partially obscures a leather vest festooned with silver buttons.

JAZZ (female, 37) plays the drums, her beret perched at a jaunty angle as she smokes a pipe.

Mesmerized, Bagga listens, observing how the humans' mouths and fingers manipulate the instruments.

BAGGA (CONT'D)
 (pointing to the
 musicians)
 Can we, we try that?
 (beat)
 Please?

INT. HUT — DAY

The troll family and musicians sit around the rough table, drinking ale from tankards.

DAZZ
 Right on troll fam, who wants to
 pluck some strings?

Dazz moves to his harp, his fingers rapidly pluck a lively ditty.

MAZZ
 Or blow the pipes.

Mazz stands, gets her bagpipe and trills out a funky note.

JAZZ
 Scat a tat tat on the drums.

Jazz twirls her drum sticks and taps out a foot-thumping beat.

The family stare blankly back.

BAGGA
 Dad has power, powerful lungs. Mom
 has, has nimble fingers.

JAZZ
 Looks like it's the drums for you,
 kid.

Dazz looks at Klairadair's claws and shakes his head. Bagga helps trim them.

Borrarorr takes the bagpipe and prepares to blow.

BLUUUUURB!

The bagpipe nearly bursts.

MAZZ
 Alright man, you gotta chill. Don't
 break it, just ache it.

Jazz smokes a pipe, watching as Bagga taps tentatively on the drum.

EXT. HUT — DAY

The cacophony emanating from the hut startles the birds, and chases the pinkietoads away. It sounds like musical instruments crying out in pain as they're chucked down a staircase.

Po removes a white pebble, only 2 white and 1 black remain.

EXT. HUT — NIGHT

The noise sounds more like music now. The birds and pinkietoads return, edging closer to the hut.

Po removes a white pebble, only 1 white and the black remain.

INT. HUT — NIGHT

Jazz closes her eyes as she listens to Bagga on the drums. She furrows her brows and opens her eyes.

JAZZ

Bagga, you memorised the tune, and you're playing it correctly.

Bagga heaves a sigh of relief.

JAZZ (CONT'D)

But, don't worry about getting it right. Do what feels right, in the moment. Listen to what the others are playing, and riff on it. Yeah?

Bagga nods but says nothing. He quickly wipes a small purple tear from his eye before the others can see it.

Poe removes the last white pebble from the windowsill. Only the black remains.

EXT. BRIDGE — DAY

In the middle of the bridge, Bagga sits on the ground, a leather drum in front of him, beret perched on his large head.

To his right, Klairadair sits on a wooden stool, flexing her fingers and breathing deeply as she rests her cheek against the harp.

Behind them, Borrarorr, with a bagpipe.

Bagga looks to the east end of the bridge.

Their human mentors stand to the side. Jazz catches his eye, removes the pipe from her lips and mouths the words break a leg, kid.

Gradually a few pedestrians and drivers with horse-drawn carts gather on the east side, waiting to cross over.

Bagga spots an OLD MAN leaning against a cart full of rotting fruit, holding a worm-ridden apple in his left hand.

Bagga swallows hard as sweat drips from his face onto the drum. The MAN stamps a foot and glances around the crowd, then back at the trio of trolls on the bridge.

OLD MAN

Jaysus! What you waitin' fer? Get on wit' it already.

BAGGA

(nods)

Ah, one, ah one two, three, four.

The family plays a well-known ditty of the day, 'The Raven Calls at Night.'

Slowly the tune changes, and, while still recognizable, the tempo becomes less syncopated, more free-flowing.

When it's time for Bagga's drum solo, he concentrates hard, trying to remember the tune he's practiced for days. While he's not making any errors, his drumming lacks vibrancy and life.

He looks up to see the crowd. Some are yawning. The old man tosses the rotten apple a foot in the air, and catches it, like he's getting ready to throw it.

Bagga freezes, unable to continue.

Jazz smiles and nods encouragingly.

Klairadair improvises, her harp sounds like rain falling on the river and Borrarorr joins in, the bagpipe like distant rolling thunder.

Bagga swallows hard. He resumes playing the drum, echoing the rainfall and turning it into a frothing storm, before fading into a misty drizzle.

At last the music stops.

Bagga takes a deep breath and walks toward the humans, holding his beret out.

They stare back blankly.

Then the man with the fruit cart drops a few coins into it.

MAN

I dinna know what the devil that
were. But I liked it.

As Bagga walks through the crowd, the hat fills with more
coins.

A woman wearing a crimson cloak, her face hidden by a hood,
steps forward from the crowd.

She flicks back the hood.

The crowd GASPS. It's Princess Thalia.

The troll family bows deeply.

Princess Thalia approaches Bagga and takes the hat full of
coins.

PRINCESS THALIA

That was intriguing. What do you call
that sort of music?

BAGGA

Uh, we, we call it
(beat)
Mazzadazzajazza .

PRINCESS THALIA

Quite a mouthful. But at least you
have gold, for now.

Jazz grins widely, giving a thumbs up.

Thalia dumps the coins into her purse and gives Bagga the
'I'm watching you' gesture, two fingers point at her eyes,
then jab in Bagga's direction.

INT. HUT — NIGHT

The family clinks stone tumblers of ale, laughing and
smiling around the table. Poe pecks at a parcel of fish.

BORRADORR

I'm so proud of you, Bagga. I think
it's time that you had a journey
name.

Bagga sets down his tumbler and the family holds hands
around the table.

BORRADORR (CONT'D)

What do you choose?

BAGGA

I choose

(beat)

Bagga jazz.

POE

Caw!

The tale is done the truth be told,
We learned anew, the young and old To
live, to change, with bright
laughter

Happy, in the ever after.

Caw!

FADE OUT

THE END