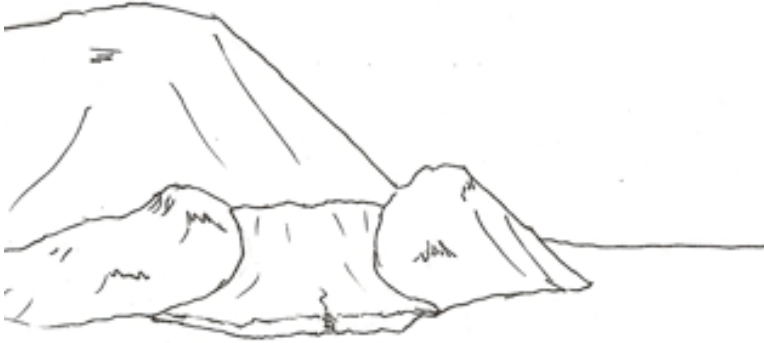


Pushing The Glacier

*** a short story about a boy, a wall of ice, and a troll ***

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Illustrations by Zoë Baum**

Chapter I: We meet the boy.



Every morning, Callan would go outside his home and push the glacier as hard as his eleven-year old strength could manage. Callan was not a large boy, so this was not a large amount of pressure on the glacier.

Callan, his parents, his big sister Lente and his little sister Verbungt lived in the same home that his grandparents, great-grandparents, great-great-grandparents and even his triple-great grandparents lived. It was on the edge of the water about a half a day's boat ride North of Trondheim, Norway.

Callan's triple-great grandparents built the house on the edge of the water nearly one hundred and fifty years ago. The house was set between two small hills on slope that led up to a higher hill and, eventually, a small mountain. When Callan's triple-great grandparents built the house, they knew there was a glacier towards the top of the slope. It was hard *not* to notice the giant wall of ice that had settled, as they did, nicely on the downhill slope between the two hills. What they didn't know (and, to be fair, what *no one* at that time knew) was that the glacier was slowly, but steadily moving towards the house.

One hundred and fifty years later, the glacier had moved down the hill, inch by inch, day by day, month by month, until it was now just a few feet from Callan's back door. Callan's parents knew that the glacier would meet their house and, as sure as there were fish in the ocean, push the house into the water to join these fish.

So, every morning before walking to school, for as long as his strength held out that morning, Callan's pushed at the glacier.

Oh, Callan was not a dumb boy. He knew that pushing at the glacier did nothing to stop its progress. Even Gunnvar, the strongest boy in the school, pushing nonstop for twenty years would not slow the glacier by one minute. Even all the boys in the school could not help.

No, Callan's family couldn't move into a new home. Usually when people move, they sell their first house and use that money to pay for at least a large part of the new house. Since no one would buy a house with a glacier just inches away, Callan's family had to save all the money up from scratch. Callan's parents kept trying to save money but something kept happening to use up all their savings. First, it was funerals for his grandmother and grandfather. Then it was a new motor for the boat. Then it was a new storage house. Then it was ... something else. And the next year it would be something else again.

Callan looked forward ten years to the day the glacier would entirely fill the space between the hills, his house would be in the water and he, his parents, and his two sisters would be sitting on the side of the hill looking down to where they used to live.

So Callan had to do something. And the only something he could think of was to push at the glacier until the real something, the idea that might help him move the glacier or move the house, came to him.

"It's harder to think when you are pushing," said Trulla, one of the girls at school. "If you spent all the time just thinking, instead of thinking and pushing, you might actually think of something."

Gunnvar was less hopeful. He was a big boy, far larger than most adults, but he wasn't a bully. He was actually one of the nicest boys in the school, though few people believed this could be true since he was so large. Callan was the only one who knew, really, that Gunnvar was so nice.

"Nothing can stop the glacier," said Gunnvar. "Not strength. Not brains. Not even dumb luck. There is no hope for your house."

Even so, every morning, Callan pushed and pushed and pushed and pushed at the glacier until he was too tired to do anything but lean against it and cry. When the tears stopped (or froze if it was cold enough ... which was a great number of the days of the year) Callan would grab his book bag and walk the two miles to school.

His sisters needed to be at school earlier than he did, so he walked down the snowy streets and through the town alone.

"Any luck, today?" teased the other children.

"Nope," said Callan matter-of-factly. Some of the other boys were bullies, but they knew Gunnvar was friendly with Callan and, for this reason, did nothing more than tease him.

Chapter II: We meet the troll.

One morning, when Callan was outside pushing at the glacier, he heard a voice from above him. It was deep, gruff and menacing, but also somewhat squeaky. “Why push you? Ice not move.”

Callan looked up and saw a troll sitting on top of the glacier. Trolls were very uncommon in Callan’s town, but not unknown. While you might see one wandering along the top of the mountains, they almost never came down to the village. Once, when Callan was five, a troll was seen standing next to the school. Its head almost reached to the top of the single-story building. They canceled school that day. The next day, the troll was gone and school was open again. Neither of the two teachers would speak about the troll.

So, when Callan looked up and saw that there was a troll (and a rather large one as it appeared) talking to him, he was very afraid. He thought about running, but didn’t want to turn his back on the troll, which could slide down the ice face and, perhaps, in one bite, swallow his head. Also, Callan was a polite boy who didn’t judge people by their size.

“I know,” said Callan. He said nothing more, but continued to look at the troll. The troll didn’t move or even blink, but continued to look down at Callan.

Callan wasn’t sure what to do next. Should he run? Should he scream? He thought any movement or sound at all would mean he’d be the troll’s breakfast.

The troll narrowed its eyes and leaned its head a little closer, but still said nothing.

Finally, the troll spoke again. It seemed a little impatient. “Why push you? I question. You answer.”

Callan was unsure what the troll wanted. “I don’t know,” he replied.

Now the troll got angry. It stood up and stomped its feet on the top of the glacier. “You think troll stupid?”

“N-n-n-no,” said Callan, though he really didn’t know if trolls were smart or not.

The troll seemed to take this well and sat back down. It smiled ... sort of. In a nicer tone of voice, it said, “I question. You answer. *Why* push you?”

Callan sighed because it was better than crying. He was scared and sad all at once. “To try to stop the glacier from pushing my house into the water.”

The troll jumped up suddenly. Callan fell backwards and closed his eyes, expecting the troll to leap on him and eat his head. Instead, Callan heard something that sounded like a laugh or a tree creaking or both.

The troll was now dancing while it laughed. Callan wondered why it didn't slip on the ice. Its large, black feet must have good grips on the bottoms.

Through its laughter, the troll squealed, "Boy think he can move ice wall. Boy push. Ice wall move back. House saved. Funny, funny, funny!" The troll kept dancing and squealing, "Funny, funny, fun-ny! Funny, funny, fun-ny!" It became a song, of sorts, and the troll danced along, "Funny, funny, fun-ny! Funny, funny, fun-ny! Funny, funny, fun-ny!"

Callan got mad, but he knew better than to yell at a troll. He put his head down and so quietly that you wouldn't hear even in your ear were right to his mouth, he whispered, "It's *not* funny."

The troll suddenly stopped dancing and singing. It sat down. "Not funny," it agreed. "Not funny." Then it started to cry, loudly, and this sound was exactly like its laughing except for the shaking of the shoulders and the tears streaming from its face. As suddenly as it began crying, though, the troll stopped. "Cry no help." The troll narrowed its eyes again and looked down at Callan. "Cry no help. Push no help. Not funny."

Callan smiled weakly. This was all true. The troll, in its own troll-like way, had just summed up Callan's entire life.

Then to Callan's surprise, the troll stood up and smiled. A real smile, not crooked at all, and said, "Cry no help. Push no help. Not funny." Then he winked at Callan and, as it pressed one of its three fingers against its own chest, said, "Uffell help." Thinking that Callan didn't understand that the troll's name was Uffell, it said slowly, "Uffell me. Me help. Troll help."

Callan brightened at this. He looked up the glacier wall into the misshapen, though mostly human-like face and wondered if the troll, if *Uffell*, really could help.

"How you help?" asked Callan, and then quickly correcting his speech, so as to not offend the troll, asked, "How can you help stop the glacier?"

The troll, very quickly, said, "Need chocolate."

"You need chocolate to move the glacier?" asked Callan.

"No," said the troll. "Need chocolate eat."

For the first time this morning Callan smiled. He said, "Oh. You want some chocolate to eat."

The troll clapped his hands. "Yes! Yes! Uffell want chocolate eat." The troll looked very excited about the chocolate.

Callan went into the house and took one of the three chocolate bars from the cupboard. He took a step away from the cupboard and decided to take the other two as well. He expected he might need them.

When he got outside, Uffell was no longer on the top of the glacial wall. The troll was still on the glacier, but further up the slope. It waved Callan towards him.

The troll yelled, a little too loud even for the distance, "You here! Chocolate here! Eat!"

Callan had never climbed up the glacier before. His parents had forbidden it. Also, it was time for him to go to school.

He didn't want to leave the troll, but knew he would get into too much trouble if he missed school.

He waved the chocolate bar and threw it up on top of the glacier. He yelled, "I have to go to school now! I will come back after school and you can show me how to stop the glacier! I will give you two more chocolate bars if you help me!" He waved the two other chocolate bars in the air so the troll could see them.

The troll yelled down, even louder than last time, "Yes! Yes! Two chocolate eat. You later."

Callan hoped this was just the troll's poor speech and not that the troll meant to eat him after he had finished the chocolate. But there was nothing Callan could do. If the troll wanted to eat him, he'd already have been eaten.

Callan started walked down the street towards school. In a few minutes he felt a tap on his shoulder. He looked back and then up. He gasped. The troll was standing next to him!

"Thank you chocolate. Uffell help boy. Boy meet Uffell there." The troll pointed up to the top of the glacier, which was about halfway up the mountain.

Callan wasn't sure he was more scared by being next to a troll or having to go halfway up the mountain.

"I'm n-n-n-not sure I can make it that far up the mountain," said Callan.

The troll bent down so his face was level with Callan's. Callan could smell the troll's breath, which was a cross between mold and chocolate. "Boy no come, Uffell no help boy move ice wall."

With that, the troll ran-hopped into woods and out of sight.

Chapter III: Up the glacier.



Callan might as well have stayed home from school that day, since he couldn't think of anything but what he had to do after school.

He would leave a note for his parents and then go meet the troll. He knew he'd get in trouble for not doing his chores, but also knew his parents would understand if he succeeded in stopping the glacier. He didn't really expect this would happen. He actually expected that, in the end, he'd be eaten by Uffell or some other troll or perhaps was being tricked into being the dinner for a whole house (den? cave?) full of trolls, but he knew he had to try.

He did have a plan if it looked like he was going to be eaten: If he got into trouble, he would throw the chocolate bar one way and run the other way and hope the troll liked chocolate more than human.

After school, Callan told his sisters he was going out to play, which was not true, and left his parents a note that read, "*Went to move the glacier. Might be back late.*" This was true.

He put the two chocolate bars into his book bag and set off up the mountain. The walk was easier than he expected. The difficult part would be getting to the middle of the glacier. He didn't see the troll, but decided to go there anyway, and to wait.

It was slippery, but there was plenty of rough snow on top to maintain his balance. He went to the middle, to where the troll had pointed, and before he could look around to see if Uffell were coming, he saw that Uffell was standing next to him. Callan was used to the troll's sudden appearance this time and did not gasp.

The troll asked for the chocolate immediately. "Chocolate eat," it declared.

Callan responded simply and quietly, "One bar now, one bar later."

"After move ice wall?" the troll asked.

"Yes," replied Callan and for the first time, possibly in his whole life, he held out some hope that he, with the troll's help, could push back the glacier.

He handed over the chocolate bar, which in the troll's hands seemed far too small to be satisfying. The troll ate it greedily, licking and then chewing and swallowing the wrapper.

The troll sniffed the air, as if trying to find a certain smell and then nodded to Callan. "More chocolate. Good," it said. "Now go."

The troll started walk-hopping up the glacier towards the mountaintop. Callan tried to follow, but, very soon, the troll was most of the way up and Callan had still only managed a very short distance. The troll looked back and groaned, "Boy slow!"

"Yes," replied Callan, "but I am trying as hard as I can."

The troll walked-slid down to Callan almost crashing into him, but stopping just in time. "No wonder human bottom mountains," the troll chided. "Uffell carry boy." He picked Callan up and threw him over a very bumpy shoulder and, in a few dizzy moments, they were at the top of the ice flow looking into an ice cave.

"Boy go," said the troll. "Uffell stay." It added, as if it had learned a new word, "*Later* chocolate."

Callan nodded, but was nervous about going into the ice cave without Uffell. What could the troll be afraid of? And if the troll were afraid, what chance did a small boy have? He looked into the cave. It was more of a hole down than a cave. And, covered in ice as it was, more of a slide than a hole.

"Boy go," said Uffell and before Callan could reply, the troll gave him a push and down he slid into the darkness.

Chapter IV: Into the ice cave.



For what seemed like an hour, but was really less than a minute, Callan slid and spun and twisted and dropped and turned and slid some more, both up and down but mostly down, until he slowly came to an upward place that slowed his movement enough that he could put his hands down and stop. His bottom was soaked, he was freezing cold and it was too dark to see his hands in front of his face, but for some reason, he felt none of this was important.

What he thought was important was the following: he was inside the glacier.

He heard running water to his left, so he decided to try that way. Hands in front of him, feet slipping and sliding, Callan managed to press forward towards the sound of running water. The sound got louder and louder and either his eyes adjusted to the lack of light or the room (cave? area?) was getting brighter. He could see he was in a tunnel that was gently sloping upwards. The tunnel was covered in ice on the sides, but frozen dirt on the bottom. It was too dark to see the roof.

After a few more steps, Callan's foot landed with a splash. He pulled his foot out of the water and looked down at a small running stream. He knew that this was what was causing the glacier to grow. If he could find a way to stop this stream, the glacier, too, would stop. He no longer cared that his bottom and now his foot was soaking wet. He had found the source of his family's grief. If he could find the beginning of this stream, he might be able to save their house!

Callan started walking upstream. As he progressed upwards, the tunnel became lighter and lighter. Unfortunately it also became smaller and smaller. Soon, he

could reach the ceiling. Soon after that, he had to duck his head as he walked. Not much farther up, he had to stoop ... then bend his knees as well ... then walk with his hands on the ground ... then crawl ... and, sooner than he had hoped, he was pulling his body forward with his hands, almost swim crawling in the stream. Finally, he was too large for the tunnel and could go no further. He slide a little backwards, pleased that he wasn't stuck, which didn't help him find the source of the stream, but meant he could go back down if he wanted.

'Phew!' thought Callan. 'In stories like this, the little boy always seems to get stuck.'

But even though Callan wasn't stuck and could retreat, he wasn't yet ready to give up. Maybe he could find a solution.

By now, the tunnel was about as light as day. He rolled a little to the side and looked at the sun. It was an orange globe just beginning to go over the mountain. It was more to one side of him than above him. Callan realized that he must be right at the top of the mountain. The beginning of the stream should be very close. He was more determined to save his family tonight, if he could.

He looked for a stick on the ground, thinking he might break through the glacier tunnel and continue forward on top. He found no stick. Then suddenly, with no warning, it got dark. As if something had blocked the sun.

He looked to where the sun used to be and saw a giant pair of legs. Looking farther up, Callan saw that these legs were attached to a troll. It was Uffell! Callan waved to Uffell to break through the ice. Uffell smiled and waved back. Callan waved more excitedly – as best as he could in the tight space – and Uffell waved back even more excitedly, seeming to enjoy the game. After a few minutes, the sunlight fading every minute, Callan gave up waving. He reached into his book bag (with some effort) and pulled out the chocolate bar. He placed the chocolate bar on the ground in front of him and slid back a few feet.

Just as he expected, Uffell smashed his find into the ice tunnel and grabbed the chocolate. This produced a hole large enough for Callan to climb through.

Callan was so happy, he jumped up and gave Uffell a big hug or, to be exact, gave Uffell's thigh a big hug; it was as far as Callan could reach. Uffell barely noticed. The troll was too busy eating the chocolate and licking, and then eating, the chocolate bar wrapper.

Chapter Last: A diversion of sorts.

Callan looked around. He was not where he expected to be. That is, he was not at the top of the mountain between which the glacier (and his house) rested. The tunnel must have turned and twisted, since he was standing in a forest on the north slope (the one to the right of his house.)

Down the slope, just a small ways away, was the main part of the glacier.

He felt better about this, since he would have been upset if, for all these years, stopping the glacier would have been as easy as going to the top and stopping a small stream. You had to go into the glacier itself and follow the stream from the inside. Not an easy task if you were not a small boy and you did not receive a hand and a push from a large troll.

He looked up the slope and there, a short walk away, he saw a small pool of bubbling water. It was a spring. And from this spring came a small stream of water that flowed directly to where he was standing now and, he assumed, to the bottom of the glacier where it froze into more glacier.

The first thing Callan did was walk up the spring and take a small sip of water. Even though he had been crawling in water for the past few hours, he was still very thirsty. The water was very good, but very cold.

The next thing he did was to splash as much water as he could out of the pool to get a good look at the spring. His hands were too small, so he asked the troll.

“Can you splash the water out of the spring, like this?” He showed the troll how.

The troll splashed at the spring like a baby splashes at bath water. The troll got itself wet, which it didn't seem to like.

Callan laughed, which made the troll squeal, though crying or laughing Callan could not tell. Then Callan cupped his hands and showed the troll how to splash water properly. Soon, the troll got the hang of it and had quickly emptied the small pool of water.

Inside the now empty pool was a crack in the rock from which the water leapt. Callan wondered if he could plug this leak. He found a long thin rock and asked the troll to bring it to the pool and wedge it in the crack. This, the troll understood just fine. He jammed the rock into the crack, but the water seemed to come out from either end of the crack, and just as quickly. He pointed to two more thin stones and asked the troll to stick them into the two new cracks. The troll did this as well, but, once again, the water seemed to find a new way out.

Callan wasn't sure what to try next. More rocks? But these would just make the water come from new cracks. Fill the whole pool with dirt? He doubted this would help.

The sunlight was fading fast, so Callan needed an idea quickly.

The more he tried to think, the more he came up with nothing. Then he remembered his father's advice about ideas. "Sometimes," said his father, "when you can't come up with a solution, you need to get your mind off the problem. Then, when you go back to it, you can up with an idea you didn't think of before. Otherwise, your brain will just go in circles." When his father couldn't come up with an idea, he would usually tell the three children (Their names are Lente, Callan and Verbungt if you remember from the very beginning of this story) to go hide and he would try to find them. Since the other children weren't there, Callan decided to teach the troll how to play hide-and-go-seek.



Before he got very far into the explanation, the troll said. "Know game. Boy count. Uffell hide. Boy find."

"Yes!" said Callan. "That's exactly right!" The troll was happy to be correct. It clapped its hands and as soon as Callan turned his back and sat down to count, it ran-hopped off to find a place to hide.

So Callan sat down near the spring and started counting.

"...twenty-four...twenty-five...ready or not here I come!" finished Callan and he got up and turned around. The troll was nowhere to be found and the day had all but turned into night. He hoped he could find the troll fast and he could then figure out a way to stop the stream.

Callan looked around the area, wondering where such a large creature might hide. Normally, he would try to find good hiding places for himself and then look there for his sisters, but that wouldn't work in this case.

'For example,' Callan thought, 'the troll could never fit in that hollowed-out log.' Once the thought of the hollowed-out log entered his head, he knew he had the solution to his problem. He didn't need to stop the stream, he just needed to make it go another direction. He needed to divert it from the tunnel leading to the bottom of the glacier. The hollowed log would work perfectly! Just put one end where the stream bubbled out of the spring and the other end facing away from the glacier.

The log was far too heavy for him to lift, but he knew the troll could do it without much effort at all.

"Uffell! Uffell!" yelled Callan. "Come out I need you!" But Uffell did not appear. 'Oh no!' thought Callan. 'He thinks I am trying to trick him into showing me his hiding place. I guess I will really have to find him.'

This took longer than Callan had expected since Uffell could get very far in twenty-five seconds. Plus, it was getting dark. Eventually, though, Callan heard a grumbly chortle from behind a large rock across the slope and, there, he found Uffell.



Callan was right that Uffell could easily move the log and, again, correct that it would divert the stream away from the glacier. He was also right that this would stop the glacier.

Epilogue: Trolls must have their chocolate

Callan and the troll had saved the house.

The glacier stopped in its tracks and, while it melted a little on hotter days and swelled a little on colder days, it never touched the house or pushed it into the ocean.

Years went by. Callan married Trulla (the girl from school) and they had three children: twin boys, named Bjorn and Svein, and, two years later, a girl named Marte.

As we rejoin the story, we see a large troll sitting near a spring where a stream pours through a hollow log. The stream continues, harmlessly, into the woods and down the north slope. Bjorn, one of now eleven-year-old twin boys, is sitting on Uffell's left knee and Svein is sitting on the right one. Both are being bounced up and down as if they were riding on horses. Marte is standing on Uffell's shoulder holding on tightly to the troll's long hair.

Callan and Trulla are sitting on a blanket nearby with the picnic baskets. Callan is carving a dragonhead on the end of a walking stick and Trulla is sewing Marte's name, in a red and black floral pattern, onto a book bag.

"Be careful, Marte," says her Mom.

"Yes," says Callan. "Do be careful, Marte. It's a long way down from a troll's head, even when the troll is sitting on the ground."

A few more minutes pass and suddenly Uffell stops bouncing the children. The troll eyes one child and then the other. It gets a very hungry look on its face.

"Uffell hungry," it declares. "Small hungry," it adds, looking closely at Marte. "Boys big. Uffell eat girl."

None of the children seem concerned.

Bjorn says, "I have a chocolate bar, but it's mine Uffell. You already had yours."

"Yes," adds Svein. "You will need to make good on your threat and eat Marte."

Marte giggles. "You wouldn't eat me, would you Uffell?"

Uffell makes a very serious face. "Very hungry..." he starts, but then breaks into a squeal-laugh. "...maybe legs."

Trulla does not look up from her sewing, but says, "Please, Uffell, do not eat the children. We just had them and I am too tired right now to have any more."

Callan laughs, then stands up. He pulls an extra large chocolate bar from one of the baskets. "It just so happened to have a troll-sized chocolate bar handy," he says. "Unless you'd rather eat Marte's legs, Uffell."

The three children quickly scurry down and off Uffell. They know that nothing can come between a troll and its chocolate.

While Uffell is quickly and messily devouring the chocolate bar, Callan decides it's a good time to give the children a life lesson.

He gathers the kids nearby and says, "Uffell will never eat any of you, not even just your legs, Marte, but other trolls will. I was lucky that Uffell became my friend. You might not be so lucky with other trolls, so it's best to keep your distance."

Marte asks, "Even if you have chocolate?"

Callan laughs, then adds seriously, "Even with chocolate. I think Uffell's teeth are a great deal sweeter than other troll's teeth might be. Best just to stay away from other trolls."



They all look at Uffell who licks the oversized wrapper and then, as usual, chews and swallows it.

THE END

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