‘This is snow,’ Moomintroll whispered to himself.

Moomins always sleep through the winter—or they did until the year Moomintroll woke up and went exploring in the silent, snow-covered valley where the river used to scuttle along and all his friends were so busy in summer.

‘They seem to grow in wisdom and delight every time I read them ... a perfect marriage of word and picture’

— Philip Pullman
INCIDENTS

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[Image of a cartoon character]
Moomin Valley in Winter
CHAPTER 1

The snowed-up drawing-room

The sky was almost black, but the snow shone a bright blue in the moonlight.

The sea lay asleep under the ice, and deep down among the roots of the earth all small beasts were sleeping and dreaming of spring. But spring was quite a bit away because the year had only just got a little past New Year.

At the point where the valley began its soft slope towards the mountains, stood a snowed-up house. It looked very lonely and rather like a crazy drift of snow. Quite near it ran a bend of the river, coal-black between ice-edges. The current kept the stream open all winter. But there were no tracks leading over the bridge, and no one had touched the snowdrifts around the house.

Inside, the house was warm and cosy. Heaps of peat were quietly smouldering in the central-heating stove.
down in the cellar. The moon looked in sometimes at the
drawing-room window, lighting on the white winter
covers of the chairs and on the cut-glass chandelier in its
white gauze bag. And in the drawing-room also, grouped
around the biggest porcelain stove of the house, the
Moomin family lay sleeping their long winter sleep.

They always slept from November to April, because
such was the custom of their forefathers, and Moomins
stick to tradition. Everybody had a good meal of pine-
needles in their stomachs, just as their ancestors used to
have, and beside their beds they had hopefully laid out
everything likely to be needed in early spring. Spades,
burning-glasses and films, wind-gauges and the like.

The silence was deep and expectant.

Every now and then somebody sighed and curled
deeper down under the quilt.

The streak of moonlight wandered from rocking-chair
to drawing-room table, crawled over the brass knobs of
the bed end and shone straight in Moomintroll’s face.

And now something happened that had never hap-
pened before, not since the first Moomin took to his
hibernating den. Moomintroll awoke and found that he
couldn’t go back to sleep again.

He looked at the moonlight and the ice-ferns on the
window. He listened to the humming of the stove in the
cellar and felt more and more awake and astonished.
Finally he rose and padded over to Moominmamma’s
bed.

He pulled at her ear very cautiously, but she didn’t
awake. She just curled into an uninterested ball.

‘If not even Mother wakes up it’s no use trying the
others,’ Moomintroll thought and went along by himself

on a round through the
All the clocks had stopped
dust covered everything
stood the soup-tureen in
November. And inside
chandelier was softly jingling.

All at once Moomintroll
short in the warm dark
light. He was so terribly

‘Mother! Wake up! The
world’s got lost!’ He was

But Moominmamma,
herself. She wasn’t able to open
on her bed-mat, and the

At dawn the snowdrifts
went slithering down a
the roof edge and sat down

Now all the wind
grey light found its
looked more unreal than
the earth.

Moomintroll pricked up
he lit the night-light and
drawers to read Snufkin
under the little meers, like
when he went off to the

It began with the
hand. The letter itself
on a round through the unfamiliar and mysterious house. All the clocks had stopped ages ago, and a fine coat of dust covered everything. On the drawing-room table still stood the soup-tureen with pine-needles left over from November. And inside its gauze dress the cut-glass chandelier was softly jingling to itself.

All at once Moomintroll felt frightened and stopped short in the warm darkness beside the streak of moonlight. He was so terribly lonely.

‘Mother! Wake up!’ Moomintroll shouted. ‘All the world’s got lost!’ He went back and pulled at her quilt.

But Moominmamma didn’t wake up. For a moment her dreams of summer became uneasy and troubled, but she wasn’t able to open her eyes. Moomintroll curled up on her bed-mat, and the long winter night went on.

* 

At dawn the snowdrift on the roof began to move. It went slithering down a bit, then it resolutely coated over the roof edge and sat down with a soft thump.

Now all the windows were buried, and only a weak, grey light found its way inside. The drawing-room looked more unreal than ever, as if it were deep under the earth.

Moomintroll pricked his ears and listened long. Then he lit the night-light and padded along to the chest of drawers to read Snufkin’s spring letter. It lay, as usual, under the little meerschaum tram, and it was very much like the other spring letters that Snufkin had left behind when he went off to the South each year in October.

It began with the word ‘Cheerio’ in his big round hand. The letter itself was short:
Cheerio

Sleep well and keep your pecker up. You’ll have me here again. Don’t go without me.

Moomintroll read the letter suddenly he felt hungry.

He went out in the kitchen. Under the earth as it were. The larder was just as empty. The larder was just as empty, except a bottle of fermented, and half a packet of something.

Moomintroll made himself a place in the kitchen table and began to chew once more.

After that he stretched out on the floor. The square wooden clumps under the kitchen was silent.

‘Cheerio,’ whispered Moomintroll. ‘Keep your pecker up. First slightly louder. And then he said, ‘You’ll have me here again. Spring’s in the air, and it’s here, and here we are, to the year...’

He stopped short when he saw the eyes that gleamed out at him. He stared back, and the Then the eyes disappeared.

‘Wait,’ Moomintroll shouted towards the sink, softly calling...
CHEERIO
Sleep well and keep your pecker up. First warm spring day you'll have me here again. Don't start the dam building without me.

SNUFRIN.

Moomintroll read the letter several times, and suddenly he felt hungry.
He went out in the kitchen. It too was miles and miles under the earth as it were and looked dismally tidy and empty. The larder was just as desolate. He found nothing there, except a bottle of loganberry syrup that had fermented, and half a packet of dusty biscuits.
Moomintroll made himself comfortable under the kitchen table and began to chew. He read Snufkin's letter once more.
After that he stretched out on his back and looked at the square wooden clumps under the table corners. The kitchen was silent.
'Cheerio,' whispered Moomintroll. 'Sleep well and keep your pecker up. First warm spring day,' he said, slightly louder. And then he sang at the top of his voice: 'You'll have me here again! You'll have me here, and spring's in the air, and it's warm and fair, and we'll be here, and there we are, and here and there in any year...'
He stopped short when he caught sight of two small eyes that gleamed out at him from under the sink.
He stared back, and the kitchen was silent as before. Then the eyes disappeared.
'Wait,' Moomintroll shouted, anxiously. He crept towards the sink, softly calling all the while:
'Come out, won't you? Don't be afraid! I'm good. Come back...'

But whoever it was that lived under the sink didn't come back. Moomintroll laid out a string of biscuit crumbs on the floor and poured out a little puddle of loganberry syrup.

When he came back to the drawing-room the crystals in the ceiling greeted him with a melancholy jingle.

'I'm off,' Moomintroll said sternly to the chandelier. 'I'm tired of you all, and I'm going south to meet Snufkin.' He went to the front door and tried to open it, but it had frozen fast.

He ran whining from window to window and tried them all, but they also stuck hard. And so the lonely Moomintroll rushed up to the attic, managed to lift the chimney-sweep's hatch, and clambered out on to the roof.

A wave of cold air received him.

He lost his breath, slipped and rolled over the edge.

And so Moomintroll was helplessly thrown out in a strange and dangerous world and dropped up to his ears in the first snowdrift of his experience. It felt unpleas-
But under the sink didn't run a string of biscuits. I found a little puddle of the chandelier. And so the long-balled up thing to window and tried managed to lift the handle and tried to open it. I'd dropped over the edge. The lonely jingle of the crystals made him feel as he had felt before. It was a more serious smell than any caught a new smell, the same time as it was prickly to his velvet skin, but at the same time he didn't smell it, it was white. Everything angular was now rounded. The valley was enveloped in a kind of grey twilight. Moominroll was laboriously plodding along through the snow. He went down to the river. It was the same river that used to scuttle, transparent and made him feel as he had felt before. It was a more serious smell than any caught a new smell, the same time as it was prickly to his velvet skin, but at the same time he didn't smell it, it was white. Everything angular was now rounded. The valley was enveloped in a kind of grey twilight. Moominroll was laboriously plodding along through the snow. He went down to the river. It was the same river that used to scuttle, transparent and
jolly, through Moomintroll’s summer garden. Now it looked quite unlike itself. It was black and listless. It also belonged to this new world in which he didn’t feel at home.

For safety’s sake he looked at the bridge. He looked at the mailbox. They tallied with memory. He raised the lid a little, but there was no mail, except a withered leaf without a word on it.

He was already becoming used to the winter smell. It didn’t make him feel curious any more.

He looked at the jasmine bush that was an untidy tangle of bare sprigs, and he thought: ‘It’s dead. All the world has died while I slept. This world belongs to somebody else whom I don’t know. Perhaps to the Groke. It isn’t made for Moomins.’

He hesitated for a moment. Then he decided that he would feel still worse if he were the only one awake among the sleeping.

And that was why Moomintroll made the first tracks in the snow, over the bridge and up the slope. They were very small tracks, but they were resolute and pointed straight in among the trees, southwards.

Down by the sea, farther away, the squirrel was skipping aimlessly about. He was skipping, and thinking. He was skipping, and forgetting. He was skipping, and being nobody, and going somewhere.

As a matter of fact, he never got anywhere. Mostly he was skipping, and not getting anywhere. His latest feeling was that he was getting knobbly, and so he decided to get a new one.

Now and again he mustered the courage to look at himself from forgetting what he had forgotten and not got things very easily.

The squirrel went skipping along among the trees and out on to the snow and pondered, looked up at his head and skipped along.

He came to the cave on the hill. He climbed the steps. But when he had got there he could not get anything out of it. He could only see a hole from which the wind was blowing cool air.
CHAPTER 2

The bewitched bathing-house

Down by the sea, farther to the west, a young squirrel was skipping aimlessly about in the snow. He was quite a foolish little squirrel who liked to think of himself as 'the squirrel with the marvellous tail'.

As a matter of fact, he never thought at all about anything for very long. Mostly he just had a feeling about things. His latest feeling was that his mattress in the nest was getting knobbly, and so he had gone out to look for a new one.

Now and again he mumbled: 'A mattress,' to keep himself from forgetting what he was looking for. He forgot things very easily.

The squirrel went skipping this way and that, in among the trees and out on the ice, he stuck his nose in the snow and pondered, looked up at the sky and shook his head and skipped along again.

He came to the cave on the hill and skipped inside. But when he had got there he wasn't able to concentrate
any longer, and so he forgot all about his mattress. Instead he sat down on his tail and began to think that people could just as well call him ‘the squirrel with the marvellous whiskers’.

Behind the great snowdrift at the opening of the cave somebody had spread out straw on the floor. And in the straw stood a large cardboard box with the lid partly raised.

‘That’s strange,’ said the squirrel aloud, with some surprise. ‘That cardboard box wasn’t here before. Must be something wrong about it. Or else this is the wrong cave. Or I might be the wrong squirrel, but I wouldn’t like to believe that.’

He poked up a corner of the lid and put his head inside the box.

It was warm, and it seemed to be filled with something soft and nice. Suddenly the squirrel remembered his mattress. His small, sharp teeth cut into the soft stuffing and pulled out a flock of wool.

He pulled out one flock after the other; he soon had his arms full of wool and was working hard with all four paws. He felt extremely pleased and happy.

Then all at once someone was trying to bite the squirrel in the leg. Like a streak of lightning he whizzed out of the box, then hesitated for a moment and decided to feel more curious than scared.

Presently an angry head with tousled hair appeared in the hole he had bitten in the wool.

‘Are you all there, you !?’ said Little My.

‘I’m not sure,’ said the squirrel.

‘Now you’ve waked me,’ Little My continued severely.

‘And eaten half my sleeping-bag. What’s the great idea?’
But the squirrel was so beside himself that he had forgotten his mattress again.

Little My gave a snort and climbed out of the cardboard box. She closed the lid on her sister, who was still asleep, and went over and felt the snow with her paw.

'So this is what it's like,' she said. 'Funny ideas people get.' She squeezed a snowball and hit the squirrel on the head with her first throw. And then Little My stepped out from the cave to take possession of the winter.

The first thing she accomplished was to slip on the icy cliff and sit down very hard.

'I see,' Little My said in a threatening voice. 'They think they'll get away with anything.'

Then she happened to think of what a My looks like with her legs in the air, and she chuckled to herself for quite a while. She inspected the cliff and the hillside and thought a bit. Then she said: 'Well, now,' and did a jumpy switchback slide far out on the smooth ice.

She repeated this six times more and noticed that it made her tummy cold.

Little My went back into the cave and turned her