



# The Troll Made Me Do It

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“Troll girl?”

“I never wanted to tell you because I knew it would hurt your feelings.”

Jami is slightly drunk at this midtown bar and quite talkative, adding to my dismay with a tipsy chuckle, “Greg thinks you’re *crazy!*”

I have a pretty clean track record as zany *extrovert*, as opposed to a psychotic *introvert*. Remaining friends with exes has never been a great challenge for me. Boys have always appreciated my outgoing, outlandish attitude towards keeping them in my life, even if they cheated, lied or just plain lost interest. I generally remain calm, knowing heartache will pass and friendship will show up like an obnoxious singing telegram that at least does your favorite song, however off-pitch the performance may be.

I could collect references from satisfied exes for my good behavior, relationship wisdom, excellence in scouting good date locations, and of course, bedroom technique. Except from Greg. Greg is the blemish on that record. But I lay little blame on myself, and most of it on the troll.

Jami met Greg through our recent mutual friend. Greg and I had no mutual friends pre or post split, but seven years later, we suddenly have people in common—people to whom Greg has slandered my good, *sane* name.

Greg and I met my third fall in Pittsburgh. In a matter of weeks we went from my all-time favorite first date to my most embarrassing break-up. Greg was a music critic for a local paper, and I was a starving performing arts student. Our relationship escalated quickly, the way most do among the young, horny and artistic. We adored each other, but Greg enthusiastically began too many sentences with, “*If we got married...*” and scared himself more than any lurking monsters in the dark could. Or so I thought.

My rent on this, my third haunted Pittsburgh home, was a mere \$157 a month, about \$100 less than my two roommates. This was because I took the doorless, windowless “bedroom” that resembled more a walk-in closet than a domicile. The room contained a small full-size futon, dresser, child’s desk, and like a nesting doll set, its own tiny closet.

For \$157 I was a very happy, broke college kid in my crawl space. Meeting Greg inspired me to repeatedly call our landlord about installing the door he had promised weeks earlier. Greg and I promptly celebrated its arrival with a night of feverish foreplay. I was very happy. *We* were very happy.

Greg shared with me the tale of his college girlfriend whom he “pinned” a year or two earlier. Pinning a girl, he explained, is a frat boy ritual that preempts getting engaged. Apparently, Greg was not ready for this level of broach-expressed commitment, and he suffered a panic attack so great that it led to a brief hospital stay. At 21 years of age I didn’t see this confession for what it was: an enormous red flag.

We started having sex after one week of inseparable bliss. We were falling in love and on the brink of admitting it to one another. Then we hit several small, strange speed bumps.

“I don’t wanna have sex again until I lose ten pounds.”

Girls are raised on magazines, television, and labels telling us we are forever fat and should get thinner. I knew this and was in the process of learning to love my vehicle of pleasure. But this statement wasn’t mine. It was Greg’s.

Greg was average height and stalker. He had that charismatic Gummy Bear appeal that wins over the whole room, and he was far from fat. However, Greg had grown up “The Fat Kid,” as he told me one night over nachos, and hadn’t yet come into his sexuality. Of course, I had no idea. The fact that he fucked with his shirt on should have been an indication, but I was young and too busy worrying about my own flaws. Our verbal and fluid exchange was so unbeatable that I remained oblivious to his growing insecurities. Until their manifestation...

Lisa and I had only lived in this apartment about a month when reports started coming in. Lisa and Dave, her then boyfriend, now husband, heard whispering in the walls late one evening. Neither had experienced anything supernatural in all their lives, and their eyes grew wide as they shared it with me, the resident ghost expert.

One day after reported wall chatter, we had a household electric malfunction. Earl and Megan, fellow classmates, lived above my bedroom, and all three stereos belonging to Earl, Megan, and me stopped working hours after Lisa and Dave told me about the suspected haunting. I carefully took my stereo apart and repositioned its jumbled gears (Sagittarians are natural handymen.) But Megan and Earl’s stereos suffered until they were replaced or taken to the shop.

A few evenings before the official sighting, I worked into the morning on a paper due the following day. Sitting in our living room with word processor, I tinkered away about Greek theatre and how it has so elegantly shaped our current realms of illusion. Sitting at my clunky word processor, dreaming of the day I would graduate to a PC, I had an interesting view of our softly lit kitchen.

Lyn, our Jesus-freak, self-proclaimed born-again-virgin roommate lived in the bedroom just through the kitchen. Very light shuffling sounds from the kitchen made me assume Lyn was sleepily on her way through the kitchen to the living room for the bathroom. But no. The shuffling paused.

“Lyn?”

I leaned forward to catch telltale shadows on the kitchen wall. Our litter of kittens danced about the refrigerator, meowing as though someone was there to feed them. But it wasn't Lyn. It was no one. The tiny, furry cat shadows danced about and pawed the air as though a beacon with feeding potential stood in their midst, when suddenly the refrigerator door opened by itself. I hit my feet, fearing a ghost, no matter how much it liked our cats. I didn't enter the kitchen, though. Instead I asked, “Who's there?”

Asking ghosts questions is just a way to announce, “I know you're there!” which is usually all they want—acknowledgment.

My question was answered by the roar of bagged cat food being dumped on the kitchen floor. I was keeping this food in the fridge so it wouldn't suffer bug-infestation. (Such is my Florida upbringing: the refrigeration of open cereal boxes, potato chips and anything else bugs would find enticing.) Spilled cat food spurred me and I ran into the kitchen. Our litter of kittens happily chowed from the pile, with the bag thrown nearby and the fridge door hanging wide open. No shuffling. No appearance at all. But then I heard it, clearly, deliberately. It wanted me to hear.

In the walls, just three feet from my ears, mumbling voices were discussing me. I knew it was about me. It was like entering a high school cafeteria as the table of preppy blondes discusses the size of your ass in designer jeans. A person can feel eyes on them, and often the sense of being watched is stronger than what you hear. I felt eyes. The mumbling was just to eliminate any chance of doubt that they were watching me. I ran to Lisa's room and knocked. Lisa sleepily answered.

“Lisa, you were right! I heard the walls whispering! Just now! And a ghost fed the cats right in front of me!”

Lisa was unimpressed. Sweetly, like a debutant returning to her nap, Lisa said, “I told you so. G'night, Angie.”

And back to bed she went. I turned on every light in the apartment and slept surrounded by kittens with bulging bellies. My paper wasn't completed until I could finish it in sunlight.

I didn't share this supernatural encounter with Greg. It wasn't an easy thing to share with anyone, really, let alone a person whose late-night presence was desired in my haunted apartment. He was

still running more warm than cold, but I wasn't in the spirit of taking chances with such things. Greg was a little distracted and very determined to improve the body that I was already extremely aroused by.

I was confused, scared of my surroundings and falling for a guy who hyperventilated at the hint of commitment. There are few sources of council for such zaniness.

Later, Greg and I had made plans with a fellow adorable couple, Lisa and Dave. It would be a night of heavy drinking and movies in our growing house of horrors. But something disturbing happened the night before. Something unlike anything I had ever dealt with.

I woke in my futon to the sounds of knocking. Lisa was on the other side of my precious door. It was 7 a.m., one hour before I needed to rise. But Lisa had something very important to tell me.

“Angie? Hey, sorry to wake you. Um, I just wanted to tell you why the house is trashed...it wasn't Lyn or me. It was the troll.”

*Troll?*

“I saw it this morning. I just wanted to let you know in case you were freaked out. Y'know, when you saw the mess.”

Groggy, confused, and wanting this knocker to go away, I said, “Okay, Lis...thanks.”

But who could sleep after such a wakeup call? I exited my bedroom, hoping to catch Lisa, but instead faced the horrors of a tossed, pilfered apartment. Pictures had fallen from the walls. Pillows and afghan were thrown from the living room futon to the floor. In the kitchen, my red schoolbag lay deflated, its contents dumped all over garish linoleum. My *Hello Kitty* wallet lay open, *raped*, its cash thrown about. In the bathroom, towels were pulled from the shelving unit that straddled our toilet. Despite the mess, not an item was broken or missing. *A troll?*

Two hours later I waited outside my voice teacher's studio. Fortunately, she taught Lisa just before me. Lisa exited and greeted me the way she would any other morning. But this was not any other morning. This was the day after a pirate troll trashed our home.

“What the *hell* did you see?”

Lisa was precious, warm, naïve and has only slept with one man her whole life. She was not prone to lying or even exaggeration. She grew up a meat and potatoes gal, living for the simple things in life. Years later, Lisa and Dave were wed in a Pittsburgh firehall with a classic three-tier cake and we all danced to “The Funky Chicken.”

It was very difficult to dismiss anything coming from her sweet, doe-eyed face.

“Angie, I saw it. It was standing in our living room. It was trying to catch the cats.”

She said this as calmly as she would tell me I have a package waiting at home. I had many questions. Lisa’s story was delivered with the raw honesty of a child telling on the kid who set the class guinea pig free. There was nothing to say except exactly what happened. Lisa was sleeping when her alarm clock buzzed.

She looked at the clock, reading 6 a.m., which was indeed her time rise. Lisa rose, went to the bathroom, began brushing her teeth and noticed the bathroom clock over her toilet read 3 a.m. Confused, yet relieved, she returned to her bed. Her alarm clock’s time had been adjusted since she first fell asleep, but she didn’t stay awake to question it. She simply reset the time and went back to sleep. Lisa is a no-nonsense kinda gal.

Later, Lisa’s clock went off again, reading 6 a.m. Again, she went to the bathroom to begin her morning ritual. Again, Lisa noticed the bathroom clock didn’t match her own. It is now 4 a.m. Frustrated, confused, but mostly annoyed, Lisa exited the bathroom, passing the dark living room on the way back to bed. But this time something caught Lisa’s eye and she turned. In our living room, bent over with tiny rump in the air, stood a troll.

“He was reaching under the futon trying to catch the cats.”

*He?* Not “it.” Lisa said his sex was very clear since our troll, unlike my current boyfriend, felt comfortable enough to visit us shirtless. According to Lisa, our resident troll expert, the troll smelled *earthy*, “Like dirt!”

The troll noticed Lisa standing five feet away, gawking. When asked about the troll’s reaction, Lisa said, “He just kinda glanced at his feet, then to me, with an, ‘*Oh shit*’ look on his face.”

Oh shit, indeed! Lisa said the troll appeared embarrassed to be caught. (Perhaps he didn’t enjoy being seen without his shirt?) A moment passed between them, Beauty and The Beast sharing this awkward silence, cats hissing, me sleeping with a most valuable door between us. And as abruptly as it began, it ended.

“I went back to sleep.”

Lisa faced a creature from an unknown world, *smelled* this creature, believes to this day without a doubt that his existence is true and went back to bed.

“Well, I locked my door!”

At the end of this day I placed a call to my most psychic friend of all time, Katie Baverso.

“For starters, it wasn’t a troll, it was a *nymph*, and it was there for *you*...”

Katie and I first met in a ballet class. She was small, elegant, graceful, solemn, and covered in pentacles. Katie was a loner and the best ballerina in class. I approached her one day as the other kids removed shoes and rushed to their next performing arts instructors.

“Are you a witch?”

The pentacles were a pretty good indication, but Katie seemed surprised that I would ask. We ate lunch together, bonding instantly, close friends to this day. Katie taught me how to read tarot cards, ward off evil spirits and she even removed The Evil Eye from my family after it was placed by a vengeful Christian slut my father dated.

Raised by Catholics, Katie had a family that had always been very supportive of her gifts. Thank the pagan goddesses, because Katie Baverso has been a very valuable friend to me. On this Night of the Troll, Katie instantly cracked the case.

“You summoned it, Angie. It was there to fix something. Look around. Something you couldn’t fix has been repaired.”

I hung up and shared with concerned Lisa what I had just learned. Like the lovely ingénue she was often cast as, Lisa batted big browns and contradicted, “But Angie, it didn’t *fix* anything! It messed everything up!”

This was true.

Baffled, but more sweaty from two daily dance classes, I went to the bathroom for a shower. The month before Lisa and I first moved into Lyn’s apartment, a homely little showerhead that could be purchased at any K-mart for a mere \$3.95 hung crusty and lifeless in our stall. At thirteen years of age, I had come across a hydroelectric showerhead in a *Spiegel* catalogue and talked Mom into buying it for my half-ass hope chest. (There was no actual chest, just shelves high in my closet where I squirreled away pink glass dishes, vintage hat boxes and other necessities for the eventual move out of my parents’ house.)

My coveted showerhead had a mini-spotlight in its middle, powered by water. You could replace the clear bulb with the included red, green, or blue. It was wonderful. But it stopped working. Nearly

every night I sat for thirty minutes to an hour, dissecting and configuring my waterworks contraction to no avail.

I missed facial expressions on *Seinfeld* and *Friends* because I couldn't sit anywhere for an extended period of time without working on that showerhead. Finally, I popped the washer out and had to let the dream die. That washer had been sealed between two pieces and there was nothing I could do. Except summon a dirty troll?

None of us had showered the morning of the troll. We didn't know until that afternoon. Naked and confused, I stood in blue light. This was astonishing. According to physics (and common sense), there was no way this showerhead should be working. I shouted for Lisa to join me in this water ballet. With a fish towel around me (also from my hope chest), Lisa and I stood astonished next to our seductively lit bathtub.

"The troll trashed our apartment but fixed your weird shower light?"

Lisa is saying precisely what I was wondering. Lyn, however, was not a believer.

"There are no such things as trolls!"

This statement would seem rational and probably true from anyone else in the whole world. But coming from Lyn it might as well have come from Charles Manson.

Lyn used to be a Satanist. Lisa and I had no idea when we moved in. It wasn't until we read Lyn's old diaries that we knew of her past. (We were barely 21. We had no respect for such things.) Lyn found Jesus after other Satanists pissed her off by being catty bitches and gossiping behind her back. Her diary wasn't specific, but my imagination performed a skit involving some goth girls smoking in a high school bathroom.

"Lyn thinks she's so cool! Like, she's gonna grow up and be the bride of Satan or something!"

A girl with a safety pin through her nose exclaims, "As if!" and spraypaints, "Fuck Jesus in his ass," on the bathroom wall. Suddenly, a stall door is flung open. In black lipstick and shaved head stands a very angry Lyn. A few years later, she's herding with the other team.

Lyn wrote about wild sex with her Christian boyfriend. After unprotected sex, usually outside in God's glorious nature (against trees and dumpsters), they would get on their knees and pray to Jesus that Lyn hadn't been impregnated. No condoms, spermicide or sponge—pure J.C. B.C. And I thought Catholics using the rhythm

method were crazy! Lisa and I deeply regretted invading Lyn's privacy. And we started sleeping with our bedroom doors locked.

Lyn arrived about an hour after the showerhead had come back from the dead. Like excited ponytailed cheerleaders in an Annette Funicello film, we told Lyn about our creepy new handyman.

Lyn's posture was slumped. Her eyes bulged, her jaw faded into her gangly neck and her teeth protruded like a horse—she must have prayed hard just to find someone to fuck her in the first place. After a moment of staring from Lisa to me, Lyn took a breath and said in tones she had learned from much older women at church, "You two sound ridiculous!"

Lyn wouldn't enter the bathroom to see the miracle waterfall, and she claimed it never lit up while she was in there. I doubt anything ever lit up with a naked Lyn in its presence.

My cuddly boyfriend with body issues was now coming for a drunken sleepover. It was days after his latest red flag's erection (and *none* from his torso), and I was an easily aroused twenty-one year old girl in starving-artist love. Greg arrived to get clobbered by our troll tale while the sun still hung in the sky. He wasn't impressed, but he didn't dismiss it.

Alone on our couch, I rubbed against Greg and *finally* pumped blood to his crotch. The feat took nearly twenty minutes, and I wasn't losing momentum now. I got him in my tiny room, and we went at it like rabid muskrats. I felt delight, accomplishment, love and the pressure of much urine in my bladder. But the show must go on! I knew if I took a pee break, no matter how quick, I would return to a deflated, flaccid Greg. So I fought the law, but the law won. I peed on my boyfriend.

"Oh god, stop!"

"What? What's wrong? Did I hurt you?"

He hadn't noticed the loss of my bladder battle. So I flattered him with, "Yes! Ouch! Oo! My god!"

I ran to the bathroom and finished peeing where God intended. This took about thirty seconds, but my fears were confirmed when I returned to a fully clothed Greg. He just wanted to hold me. Apparently, you can cuddle when fat—just not fuck. Now I was deflated, despite a supernatural being's visit to my shower.

Hours later, after too much drink and dancing in my silky green pajamas, I passed out in my futon as Greg and Dave guy-talked. I woke to snoring Greg around 4 a.m. Drunk merely on hormones at this hour, I rubbed against my shy boyfriend. He got a little aroused,

then muted me with, “I don’t want to. Let’s just hold each other.”

Apparently, I attracted two trolls that fall in Pittsburgh, but only one was interested in my plumbing.

My gender-bending was interrupted by a strange sound coming from the living room. Greg heard it too. He looked at me and sincerely mouthed, “The troll?”

As the man, I reached for the bedside flashlight and moved to the door. Greg had my back as a protected little woman while I slowly opened the door, expecting to see cats terrorized and our living room a mess. Nothing. Just darkness. We heard it, though. Something was knocking around the apartment. We moved through the living room to the hallway and heard the sounds coming from the bathroom.

With Greg on my back, I bravely reached for the doorknob and flung the bathroom door wide only to find Dave fucking Lisa from behind. I was relieved, disgusted, and envious. Greg and I went back to bed where I made my last attempt ever at being penetrated by him and his slight love handles.

He rejected me and turned over to snore. I was so angry that I went to the living room to sleep, braving a troll. Maybe I could summon it again somehow to fix my boyfriend’s libido?

The next morning I told Greg I want him to stop being ridiculous and give up his sweet jelly filling. We weren’t virgins waiting for prom, and we had already had sex three times. He told me everything would be fine, and a few days later I got an email from him claiming “closed for repairs.” I waited patiently, but no troll fixed my boyfriend.

Weeks later, I was still hung up on this insecure writer and took matters into my own hands by waiting outside his home one evening in my parked car. I wouldn’t consider this “stalking” since I planned to face him as soon as he came home. But then I realized how pathetic and creepy I must have appeared sitting in my car just outside his front door. So I drove around back.

Watching through the alley for Greg’s red car to arrive seemed better appearance-wise. Until, of course, he arrived home by the street behind his apartment. He saw me lurking in the shadows of an alley, watching for his approach, and naturally he sped away, denying later it was himself behind the wheel.

My attempt at stalking was just the icing on Greg’s troll-girl-story cake. Years later I ran into him at a Chelsea art gallery and he seemed petrified, draping his arm around another girl and coming nowhere near me. Crossing the gallery threshold upon my exit, just after an awkward hello and goodbye, he pulled out the big guns.

“See that girl? We used to go out. You won’t believe this...”