

Chapter 1

OBEKEY

Kisser Fairy heard the news first from an antelope. Then a frightened fawn. Then a panicked hummingbird affirmed the antelopes and fawns stories. The Goblins had chosen a king. This would ordinarily not be cause for alarm. Most animals panicked when Goblins crowned king. Fawns, antelope and especially hummingbirds were prone to excited flights of fancy and were always the first to freak out about, well just about anything. Kisser fairy saw no reason to panic. She would go and see what Goblin had been crowned king. She knew she probably wouldn't get there in time. The newly crowned Goblin would, most likely, have been turned into an unrecognizable lump of broken pieces by now. In six-hundred years a dozens and dozens of Goblins had declared themselves king but not a single one was ever able to make a rule and truly become the Goblin King. And that was just fine with Fairies. In fact, that was just about fine with everyone except for the Goblins of-course.

Goblins hardly ever made trouble for anyone while they were kingless. Fighting with one another was all they really did

until they found a king to Rule them. When they do find a king, though, they're an unstoppable foe. When that happens, and it doesn't happen too often, thousands of creatures try to find a way out of this world. Most think the human universe is pretty terrible but it's a better alternative to finding yourself roasting over a Goblin campfire. Kisser Fairy shuddered at the thought.

Moonclimb mountain rose up fast as Kisser Fairy flew over Dragon Lakes. The Goblins, if they were still on the other side of the mountain, would either be celebrating a new King or they would be chanting for a new one. Kisser Fairy sincerely hoped for the latter. As she flew up into the high mountain her heart began to sink. The Goblin fires burned bright as ever. Thousands of Goblins as far as the eye could see were all quiet. They were not chanting. This was the last night of the Red Winter Moon and, had a king not been made, they would still be chanting. She flew ever closer to their fires, her ears pricked wide open, listening for any conversation that might confirm her worst fears.

Camp after camp she spied. The fear rose in her after every camp for in each camp the Goblins were putting away their holy relics. The blooded coats and the broken helmets were all being burned in their campfires. They had chosen a king. But how long had it been? Surely not long enough for the new King to have written his Rules in their legendary book of the unbroken. Six hundred years ago it is known that the Goblin King then took three years and fifteen pages to add his rules to the book. Only then could the Goblins burn their coats and helmets. What was going on here? Something incredible? No doubt. Something to worry about? No doubt. She had to see more.

It was the same story in every camp Kisser Fairy spied: Broken helmets wrapped in cloaks and tossed with very little reverence into fires, Goblins grumbling and sloughing off their high hopes and all of them staring off toward the deep winding veins of Whisper Canyon. They all seemed to be heading in the general direction of the mostly dark canyon. While the mountain was lit with thousands of fires, far off Whispering Canyon had barely a scattered handful of camps some seemingly no larger than fifty – maybe a hundred at most – Goblins. Some seemed smaller. As Kisser Fairy snuck swiftly around and through the camps she heard the Goblins grumbling to one another. Some saying there was a king but he made a rule to make his rules the only rules. She heard too that the new King would not but blood to paper and add his rules to their *Book of the Unbroken*.

Kisser Fairy had heard stories about the Goblin Rulebook. She had heard that the goblins had made the paper out of fairy wings and bound the book with glue made from unicorn horns and made its cover from a Midnight Dragons skin. It was a Goblin Kings first act as a new king to fill the book with all the rules he could think of. Needless to say, it was not a very big book. But still, to hear of a Goblin King that was not going to put any new rules into the book? That was as disconcerting as it was hopeful. Maybe the new Goblin King was so brainless that he could only think of one rule. Maybe he couldn't write either. Maybe this Goblin King wouldn't be so bad. The Free Folk might not have anything to worry about. It might only take a handful of trained Fairy warriors to dethrone this new king and everything

could go back to normal. She followed the Goblins torches that wound fiery veins into the bottom of the canyon.

As she flew closer the small camps in the canyon had turned into one large camp and the general mood of the Goblins had gone from discouraged, distracted and grumpy to proud, focused and – dare she say it – happy! She would have to be very careful now. Goblins didn't like Fairies all too much and she didn't want to end up as pressed fairy paper in their Goblin rule book.

She flew as close as she could to where the Goblins had circled a small tent. The noise from the Goblins in the canyon was deafening. Whispering canyon was so named because a whisper would carry from one end of the canyon to the other as clearly as if you were standing next to a person whispering in your ear. With over a thousand Goblins in the canyon now Kisser Fairy had to stuff her ears with leaves just so she could hear herself think. There were too many goblins between her and the tent now so she decided on perching in an old withering tree growing out of the canyon wall. She would have a good view of the new King when he emerged from his tent.

When he showed himself she could size him up, fly back home, gather a band of heroic warriors, defeat the dumb king and go home to a parade! Oh, she thought, flowers and fireworks! The Free Folk would name a day after her! No! They would name a whole season after her!

“Kisser's Season!” She said out loud. And she heard herself. She heard her voice echo in the silent canyon. She looked down

to see all the Goblin looking up into the sky. She tucked herself deep into the tree's branches. During her daydreaming the King had come out of the tent and the Goblins had gone silent. Stupid move, she thought to herself. Her words from a second ago carried on an echoing wave through the canyon. A long echoing reminder of exactly how much danger she was in right now. She looked toward the tent and to the small helmeted figure that stood outside now. He too looked up into the sky and around the canyon, presumably listening to her own echoing words fading.

Fairy eyes are incredibly good at seeing long distances. Good at seeing close up too. Overall incredibly good at seeing everything except for tonight maybe. The figure that came out of the tent was barely large enough to be a Goblet never mind a full size Goblin. What kind of Goblin was this new king? Kisser Fairy strained her eyes to see the new Goblin King but he was facing the wrong way. C'mon, turn around so I can get a good look at you, she thought. And then, as if the new king had heard her thoughts, he turned around. She could see his face.

"Oh no," she whispered, "Obekey."