

CHAPTER 8

JUST A COUPLE OF KIDS

Warthog watched as the goat king and their captain disappeared into the tent. He sniffed the air and plucked a stick out from between his teeth. He eyed the tent, 'Goat would have been good today,' he thought to himself. He was hungry as were the rest of his companions. They had only brought enough food with them to last through the Red Winter Moon and then just barely enough. They were a ravenous crew and had hearty appetites and goats were a goblin favorite. He looked over at the giant boulder that had pressed his comrades into the pages of history. A goat king. Ridiculous, was the word that sprang into mind and stuck there like a hungry tick.

There had never been two kings before. There should never be two kings. He had never heard any goblin stories of two kings before but he was not an expert. There had definitely never been a *goat king* before! Warthog stuck the stick in his mouth and chewed thoughtfully. A Hob' would know. He scratched his chin and stood up from the dying fire. Goblins don't eat goats, the goat had said. 'Well,' thought Warthog, 'this Goblin does eat

goats, he will continue to eat goats and no goat will ever be a king to me!' He spit the stick out of his mouth and stared out over the canyon to the other green pillar of fire burning in the far distance. He wondered what the rules the other king had made. Surely nothing so ridiculous as taking goats out of his and every other Goblins diet.

He grabbed his axe, helmet and bag and headed toward the Hob's camp. He was an old Goblin and had fought alongside many kings but he would never fight for a goat! Even if the goat could call boulders from the sky to smash his enemies. He counted the kings he had served while he walked through the crowds of confused and hungry comrades. Most of them had never known the rule of a Goblin King. They had never felt the power surge through their veins! They had never heard the stampeding blood drums thundering in their hearts! He pitied them. Even if they did feel it now it would not be the same. No goat could summon the war gods of the Horde. Even if, and it was a huge if, the goat could do that he would not let the call of a goats gods be his call. He would not bah like a goat into battle! He mumbled curses all the way out of his camp.

A Hob is as mystical as a Goblin gets. Though they claimed to have a mastery of magic, Warthog knew that they possessed nothing of the sort. They did however have keen minds. Somehow a Hobgoblin kept Goblin history, thousand of years of it, in their heads. Warthog had no idea how. He couldn't remember what he'd had for breakfast. It wasn't goat. Hobgoblins were few and alway the oldest of the Goblins. The Hob he was going to see was the youngest of all the Hobs and looked it too. He was only the size of a Goblet and his horns were

all wrong. Warthog thought he was a Goblet when he first saw him.

Brumixgig was King when he had met the little Hob. When Warthog had sat in his first Council with Brumixgig he had thought the Hob the Kings Goblet. The talk of that first council was as it had been with all previous Kings. Warthog remembered the dull droning chit chat on the finer points of Goblin rule making. Many Goblin Kings prided themselves on their rules. They often spent months reveling in the words they chose to make their rules and some spent years perfecting their pros before they push them down in the Great Book. Brumixgig would have been such a King had it not been for the little Hob sitting next to him.

Warthog thought back and smiled to himself. The day he met the little Hob had promised to hold nothing but boring rule talk. The king had called on the Greatest warriors from Horde and so it was that, when Warthog made his reluctant arrival, he made note of the tiny Goblet sitting amongst the hulking shapes of the great Goblin warriors. He was strange looking even for a Goblet. He had three horns, not two, four or six horns sprouting from his head. His eyes were not the eyes of a Goblet. A Goblet would have been in wonder of the mighty warriors surrounding him. A Goblet would have had an expression of bewilderment or surprise or boredom. This one had eyes that took everything in. He watched and said nothing while the other Goblins praised Brumixgig for his decisive word craft and his elegant yet strong rule making. The brutish Goblin warriors would lavish the new king with compliments, baubles, food, wine, weapons, armor and promises of fealty. All they really wanted was war and magic.

The three horned Goblet knew it even when, it looked too Warthog, the King did not. Not every conjured King was a good Warborn Goblin King. Some just wanted magic, some wanted praise and some didn't know what to want. A Warborn Goblin King that came from beneath the blood cloak thirsted for magic and war, made their rules quickly and marched before the sunset of their first day. Brumixgig had already loafed for months. He called all the greatest Goblins to him instead of letting them find him in battle. Instead of giving other Goblins a chance to be blooded, he let himself be placated by adulation and gifts. It made Warthog angry but he knew that his anger would not last for very much longer. He was already feeling the Kings euphoric effects and knew the closer he was the more euphoric he would feel. Thats how it was with Kings. Their presence was intoxicating and their righteousness was irrefutable! Not so much with a goat King. Warthog had felt it with every King before Brumixgig and it lasted until their death. Once they were gone though, their intoxicating fog following them into the fires of the pyre, the Goblins found themselves lost again. Just as he brought them together and turned them into the unstoppable Horde his death would bring confusion and aimlessness. The times after Kings could be good and could be bad. A good king dies with his Goblins fed and wanting for nothing for years. There had been few of the good kind. Chances were more Goblins would find themselves starving soon after a kings death. Warthog remembered how, at the time, he might of felt sorry for himself and Goblin-kind had he not been so enamored. The King had one of the most superb jawlines he had ever seen. Of course his glorious moose antler helmet wasn't anything to sneeze at either.

But he had been and as the King spoke he fell into his words just as everyone in his council did except for, maybe, the young

Hob. Warthog could only remember, upon reflection long after the unfortunate demise of King Brumixgig what happened during that first council with the young Hob. The Goblins, meaning the King mostly, were discussing the poor shape of the Horde. Warthog came in and was ushered to a fine caterpillar rug in-between the Hob and a giant Goblin he did not know.

“The Horde is hardly the Horde I remember,” the King went on, “of course, I do not remember who I was or when that was or if it was. But that makes no difference now! The horde shall be as I remember! We will be great again! We will be the most magnificent Horde!” And on he went with the ridiculous babble of Kings. But we were all inspired and we felt his blood in us and it roared and clawed and gloried in it’s own awakening!

The Hob, however, sat stoic and still like he had not heard the king or like he had heard it all before. The King was about to begin another extemporaneous and, no doubt, inspiring speech the Hob reached up and grabbed his ear. It was something that no other Goblin would even think of doing less he loose an arm or more likely his life. The Hob pulled the Kings head down toward him and whispered something in his ear. It was a long whisper and the King’s face was a kaleidoscope of reactions.

Warthog had not heard what the Hob had said to the King but whatever he said made the King’s demeanor change so dramatically that every Goblin in the room became solemn and purposeful.

“Goblins!” The King stood and tore the blood coat from his shoulders, held it in front of him and dropped it into the fire. The

message was clear. Rule making was done. Burn the helmets and coats. Goblins were going to war.

Many years later and days after the Kings death Warthog happened upon the three horned Hob. "What did you say to him?" Warthog asked bluntly without introduction or pretext.

"To get him off his royal rump you mean?" The Hob toyed with a bauble hanging from his neck and blew into it. A sick duck call sounded from it. Warthog winced.

"Yes," Warthog stepped in front of the Hob.

"I told him the truth. I told him that glorious stories and exultations of Goblin glory would not feed the horde. I told him, in so many words, that his words were making the goblins hungry but his words would soon run out and when they did the Horde would look to see if they could find more."

Warthog's blank stare indicated to the Hob that the intimidating Goblin had not understood. "I told him," the Hob said exasperated by his having to further explain, "that the Horde would eat him when he ran out pretty words!"

They became traveling companions not long after and remained good friends. Warthog, not being fond of keeping baubles, had provided the Hob with as many baubles as he could carry. Warthog had made the Hob trinket rich. And now the Warthog needed answers to this goat king puzzle.

He smiled to himself remembering that first meeting. The Hob's camp was full of Goblins that Warthog would never associate himself with. Some were scrawny twigs of things and

others share deformities like the Hob's own. He supposed that this is why the Hob surrounded himself with them. They must have been a comfort to him. He spotted his destination. The Hob's tent was, like the Hob, unusual. It was best described as flotsam and jetsam tied together with animal hides and large baubles all bragging the hobs wealth. Two weasel like Goblins stood outside of the entrance.

"Out with you, you old miser!" Warthog screamed at the tent scaring the weasel guards. They dropped the points of their spears and aimed at his chest. "Don't be ridiculous," Warthog snarled at them.

"Too many green fires for you my friend?" A voice beamed out from the tent.

"Come out," he demanded.

"I'm indisposed at the moment." It meant, Warthog knew, that his fickle friend was taking his ritual spiced bath. "Either come in or we have a loud conversation through thin walls." Which meant Warthog would have to hunch himself into the tent and walk with cramps for days after. The weasel brothers, for that is was he decided to call the Goblin guards, quickly moved out of his way. He grunted his way into the opening. Not long after his entering, the familiar cackling laugh of the three horned Hob was heard throughout the camp.

"A goat! Ha hah ha ha ha aaaah hah, a goat! Really?" The weasel brothers turned their questioning faces to the tent.

"What is so funny?"

“So, what we have here in our midst are two Goblin Kings.” More laughter and this time it was twice as loud. Warthog could never stop himself laughing with his friend even if he had no idea what it was that he was laughing about. The cackling tenor and the cavernous bass of their laughter was legendary. Lon and Chaney is what the Goblins started to call them though no one knows quite why. The Hob preferred Laurel and Hardy but once Goblins got something stuck in their head there was no getting it unstuck!

“Really, my friend, why do you laugh? This is cause for great concern!”

Through the walls of the tent, “No great concern! Just an interesting one! Really, my old friend, really interesting!”

“And I suppose I’ll have to wait to find out why you think it’s so interesting. You could save me a cramped back and a long walk back if you just told me now.”

Inside the dim tent three horns and two feet stuck out above a tin bathtub. Warthog hunched his head over a plate of cooked beetle larvae and poked, nibbling on their soft boiled cinnamon skeletons.

“No need to worry. This should be a fun time to be a Goblin. Or it could be the worst. Depends on who’s left to ask after it all,” the bathtub echoed.

“So,” Warthog shifted himself further into the ‘still not comfortable’ position, “you’re going to make me wait.”

“Oh no, good friend,” said the bathtub, “as far as I know, and from what my birds and bones tell me, from your surprise Goblin goat king news, we have nothing to worry about.”

Warthog gave the tub a suspicious eye.

“After all, it seems like our kings, real or not, are just a couple of kids!” The Hob laughed himself beneath the water.