

# Chapter 2

## SO THIS ISN'T A DREAM

The monsters gawked at him for about five minutes Yusef guessed. They shook hands, gawked at him, hugged one another, gawked at him some more and a couple even tried to touch him. He had screamed, "No!" in his loudest dog-about-to-do-something-wrong-voice and it had worked. It had even frightened him a little bit too. For some reason his voice seemed a lot deeper and a lot louder. Dreams can be funny that way. He was having a vivid dream. He remembered his mother telling him that some dreams seemed so real to her she would wake up and have to check if she had just dreamt or if her dream was actually real. Twice he knew she had a dream that had been about him being taken away and she had burst into his room to make sure he was still in his bed. That must be the kind of dream he was having here. His stomach rumbled.

The Goblins stopped. Their ears pricked up and they stared with that dumb 'holy cow' look on their faces. The same look they had on their faces when he had dropped the blanket.

"I'm hungry," he explained to the monsters. He had never seen a group of people or monsters move the way they did except for in cartoons. They ran into one another, threw open bags, dug into the dirt, tossed each other out of each others way, dumped over buckets and one even tried to offer himself up as food. Yusef doubted they understood English but he said, "I don't want to eat you."

"That's a relief," the monster replied. Well, they did understand English after all! Of course they did. It was only a dream.

A big round monster with curling horns half the size of its body walked up holding something out in front of its body. It looked like a dead Opossum. But it was not an Opossum. Opossums do not have eight legs and cat eyes.

"What is that?" Yusef said to the monster holding the...whatever it was.

"It is all we have for you my King," it said, "until we can gather a proper feast. We did not expect to have you amongst *us* tonight."

“Okay,” Yusef said, “but I’m not eating that.”

“Of course not, my King.” He tossed the eight legged opossum over a shoulder where it hit the ground, lay there a moment, raised its head, looked around, tried to run and was promptly swallowed up by another monster.

“Do you happen to have something to eat that won’t run away?”

The monsters looked at one another. Then they looked at Yusef. One monster stepped forward. This one was taller than other monsters and his face was narrow and solemn looking. Its eyes were beady and his forehead was covered with spikes that looked like lions claws. Its pointed ears were both pierced. A toy army man hung from the right ear and on the left ear a baseball trading card hung by a paperclip. It knelt in front of Yusef and bowed, its head still several feet above Yusef’s own. Carefully its hands reached up to its ears, plucked the army man, the trading card and, with what felt like much ceremony, handed them to Yusef. Yusef took them, one in each hand.

“Hmmm,” he said looking at the olive green figure stretched out, a bent rifle to his shoulder, “a sharpshooter.” He flipped the trading card over in his hand, “Jackie Robinson? Never heard of him before. I’m really not a baseball fan and I already have enough sharpshooters. Thanks but no thanks,” Yusef said and handed the monster back his funny ear decorations. The monster took them in his hands and, Yusef swore, as it turned away it looked like it was crying.

“We are sorry but you may have picked the poorest and most unworthy of all the Goblin clans.” Yusef turned and saw the monster talking to him. It was a mutated frog with big teeth, ram horns and a beard. Its eyes were different colors: one red, one blue. “You have honored us and our legacy will be great but we have no food, no trinkets and no worthy crown for you. The helmet you wear on your noble skull is not that of a fallen warlord but mine from when I was a Goblet. I must ask,” it tilted its head and move closer to Yusef, “why did the King choose us?”

Yusef reached up and took off the helmet he had forgotten was on his head. It was old and beat up. The horns had been broken off and fastened back on with torn cloth and some bad smelling glue. The visor was cobbled together of different pieces of metal that didn’t look like they belonged together at all. The inside smelled like the crawlspace under his house. Yusef loved it.

“Look,” Yusuf said to the ten monsters, “I didn’t pick you. My sub conscience picked you. I’m just having a dream or a nightmare...” Not a very scary nightmare, he thought, “and I’ll probably wake up soon anyway. Won’t even remember you monsters anyway. So no big deal, okay?”

The brow above the red and blue eyes furrowed and its eyes squinted as it looked closer at Yusef. The frog monster pointed at the tall monster and said, "Light the Call." The tall monsters beady eyes grew ever so slightly larger. Yusef imagined that must be what surprise looks like on that particularly odd monster face. The other monsters, too, looked surprised and a little unsure of this command. Their hesitation was palpable.

"Look at him!" The bearded frog monster pointed at Yusuf. "No Goblin! Not even close! He is dreaming *us*." It got up off the ground and limped a circle around the others. "You know the legend? Our lost legend? The Goblin story the free folk tried to burn from Goblin memory?" The monsters all exchanged glances. None of them looked like they had anything close to a clue as to what the frog monster was talking about.

"Look closer friends. What we have here is not a Goblin King." The monsters looked at Yusef. Their expressions turned from puzzlement to anger in a flash. Maybe this is a nightmare, thought Yusef. "What we have before us now my good Goblin friends is nothing more and nothing less than *legend*." The monsters faces all looked as blank as grotesque could look blank. Dumbfounded would be a good word to describe their expressions.

The frog monster or goblin thing turned toward Yusef. One long fingernail came up to Yusefs nose and made him crosseyed.

"You are no longer dreaming your world, Obekey," the monsters all drew in a sharp, short stunned breath at the frog monsters words! The long fingernail touched Yusefs forehead and pushed back his helmet. "You are Obekey. You are no longer dreaming your world because now you are dreaming ours. You are more than a Goblin King! You are Obekey!"

Frog monst – goblin hissed a scream at the tall one, "Now light the Call! Bring the Clans!" The other Goblins gathered wood in a hurry and tossed it onto the small fire until it became a roaring bon-fire. The tall Goblin unraveled a small piece of leather and poured a handful of silver powder into his hand. The curly horned Goblin broke off a long pointed end of one oh his horns. Tall Goblin poured the dust from his palm into the horn, held the horn into the fire, said some words Yusef could not hear and dropped it. Tall Goblin turned his back to the fire just as the fire turned into a blaze of green light so bright Yusef had to shut his eyes and turn away.

"Come my King, you must have questions. I can help you *help us*," the frog goblin said as they moved into a small tent away from the blinding green bonfire light.

The Goblin put a hand on Yusefs' shoulder and Yusef felt, for the first time, this may not actually be a dream.

"So first let me ask you something," cautiously he let the question slip out of his mind and into his lungs, "So, this isn't a dream?" The Goblins red eye glistened in the dark tent.

"First, my name is Derdunger," The Goblin said, "Now tell me *your* name."