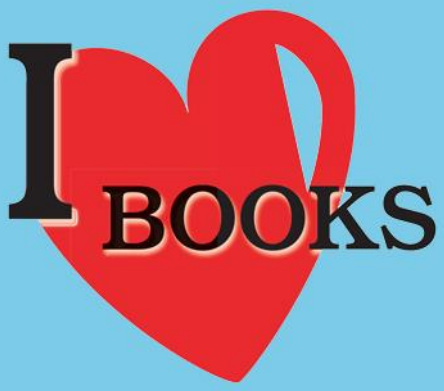


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Opening extract from

The Goblin Princess The Grand Goblin Ball

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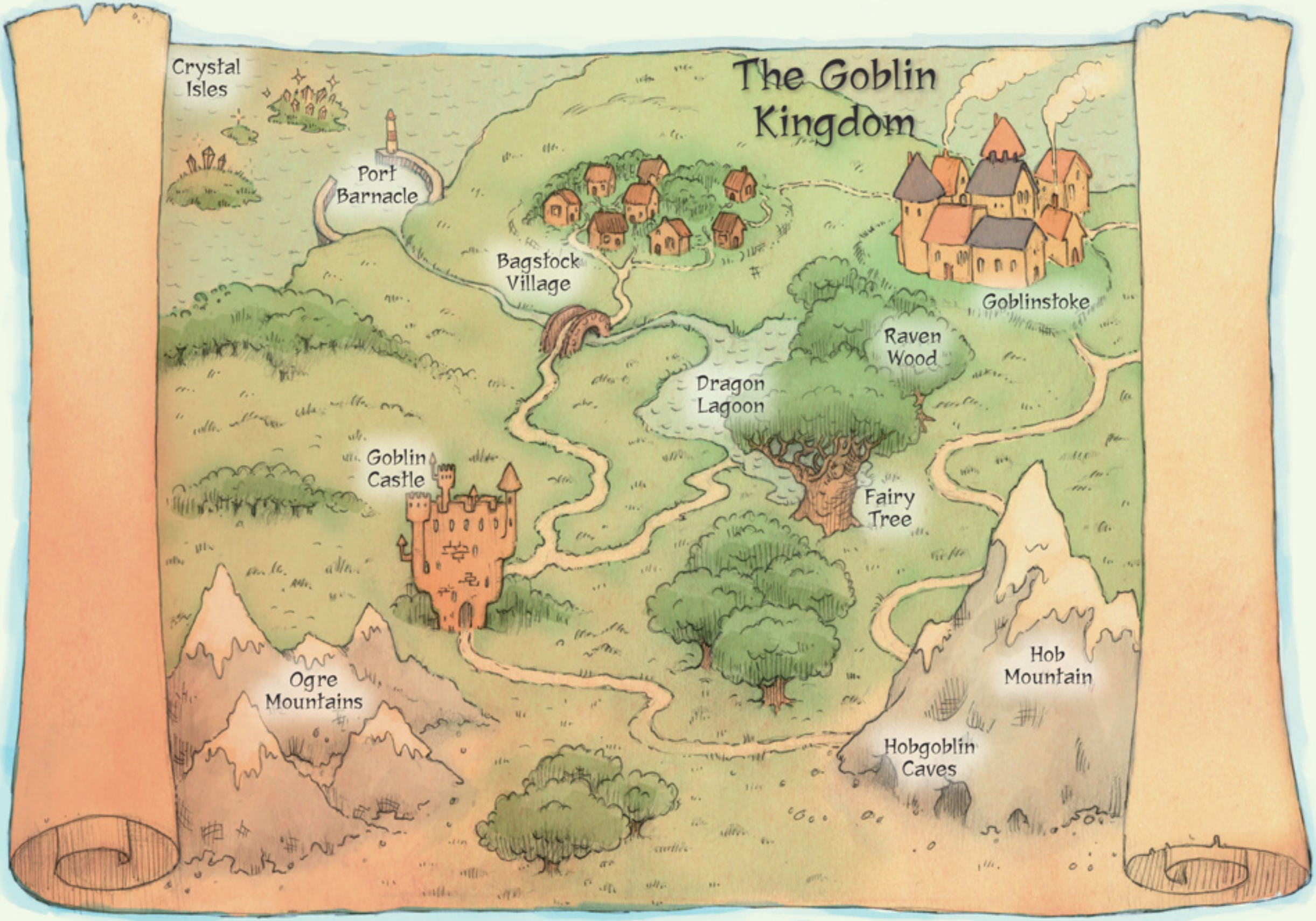
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To Etta, my imaginative little rabbit dropping.


The Goblin Kingdom
Crystal Isles
Port Barnacle
Bagstock Village
Goblinstoke
Raven Wood
Dragon Lagoon
Goblin Castle
Fairy Tree
Hob Mountain
Ogre Mountains
Hobgoblin Caves

Chapter 1

Party Invitations

SPLAT! Mrs Dollop was giving the Goblin Castle its annual spring dirtying. Matty, the Goblin Princess, was running down the stone stairs with Smoky, her pet dragon, when they were suddenly enveloped in a huge cloud of dust.

'Hello, my little rabbit dropping,'

said Mrs Dollop. 'I'm just getting the place ready for tonight's party.'

The Goblin Queen frowned. 'Mrs Dollop! Stop gossiping. There's still so much work to be done. Now, Matty, you'll have to entertain yourself today. Your father's just gone off to post all the invitations for the Grand Goblin Ball, and I have to help Mrs Dollop dress up the cake.'

'Can I invite my friends?' asked Prince Stinkwort, Matty's brother. He was managing to slide down the stair bannister, chew on a particularly slimy



slug, and talk all at the same time!

'Of course you can, Stinkwort. Everyone in the Goblin Kingdom will get an invitation. Except, of course, the horrible hobgoblins. They certainly aren't invited. Now, who will you invite, Matty?' asked the Goblin Queen.

'Matty hasn't got any friends. **BURP!**' Stinkwort belched loudly.

Matty stared at her feet miserably.

'**Burp! Plop!**' Princess Plop copied her brother.

The Queen looked down fondly at her baby daughter and wiped a bit more

dirt on to her face. 'Well done, Plop. Matty, my little horribleness, why can't you burp like your brother and sister? I know you're not like most goblins, but if only you behaved a bit more like a goblin should, you'd have lots of friends. Could you try at least to *like* eating slugs?'

'I fwiend,' said Smoky softly.

'I know, Smoky.' Matty stroked her pet dragon.



Smoky suddenly ran to the window, his little blue tail wagging wildly. 'Look, Smatty!'

'Your dragon looks like he wants to go out for a walk, my little puppy doo-doo,' said Mrs Dollop kindly.

But looking up, Matty could see what she knew no other goblin in the kingdom could. There was a fairy at the window! Fern, her very own fairy friend from Raven Wood, had come to see her!

Matty whispered a warning to her pet dragon. 'Shh, Smoky. Nobody would believe that we can see fairies!'



Fern looked like a tiny ball of sparkling light as she flew through the open window. Matty could just make out her pretty face and delicate clothes. The fairy flew straight up to Smoky and gave him a kiss, her long hair and swirling skirt of miniature fern leaves flying out behind her.

'Matty, close that window! You're letting all the dust out,' said the Goblin Queen, blissfully unaware that a little



fairy was now sitting on her crown looking curiously down at her. 'Well, Mrs Dollop, we must get on. The castle has to look its very worst. We need to untidy every room and bring in some more dust. And where are the cobwebs? What useless spiders we seem to have! Go out into the garden and catch some more, could you, Stinkwort?'

'Oooh, I'll get out the dustblower, Your Gobness. Nothing spreads the dirt as fast,' said Mrs Dollop, fetching her favourite machine from the depths of a messy cupboard.

When the goblins had left, Matty opened the palm of her hand to let Fern rest on it. 'It's so good to see you. Where are Teasel and Tansy?'

'That's why I've come,' Fern replied. 'They're missing, Matty. Have you seen them?'

Matty shook her head. 'I haven't. Have you, Smoky?'

'Cwumbs, no!'

Fern was fretful. 'They went out this morning very early after breakfast and didn't come back for lunch. I'm really worried – they've never missed a meal before. I wondered if they had come to visit you at the Goblin Castle.'

Matty was dismayed. 'No, they haven't, Fern. How can I help?'

Fern sighed. 'If the twins arrive at the castle, tell them to come home straightaway. I can't stay, Matty. I'm sorry. I'll have to carry on looking.'

So Matty waved goodbye to Fern,

watched her fly away across the messy castle grounds, then slowly closed the window. 'Oh, Smoky. This is dreadful!'

'Dweadful!' agreed the dragon, his tail drooping sorrowfully.

