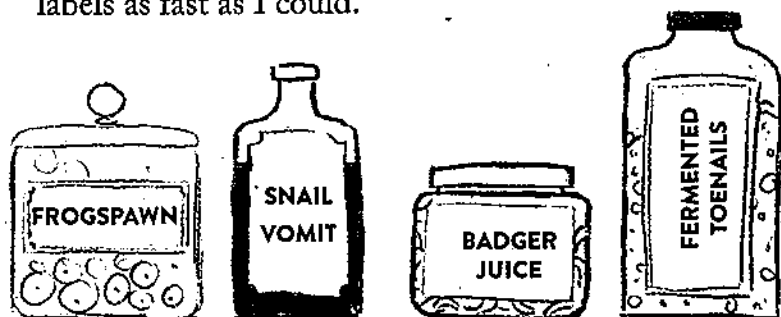




PSSST!

I clattered about the kitchen, opening cupboards and pulling out their contents. Where did Nancy keep the frog grog?

Darting up the ladders to the high shelves, I quickly grabbed at the bottles and jars, reading their labels as fast as I could.



It had to be here somewhere.

I clambered back to the floor and was about to dash down the stairs to Ooof's cellar when—

'Pssst!'

I stopped in my tracks and looked around the room.

'Pssst! Frankie ...'

The yell-a-phone in the corner of the kitchen *DINGED* and the button to Granny Regurgita's room clicked up and down repeatedly.

'Boy? Are you there?'

'Granny?' I ran over to the metal trumpet and put my ear to it. 'Granny, is that you?'

'There you are, youngling,' came Granny Regurgita's voice. 'What's going on down there? My toadstools have been itching all morning. That's always a sign of troubliness.'

'Oh, Granny, it's terrible,' I said. 'Our new guest has only been here for a little while and he's got everyone racing about like slaves.'

'New guest? What new guest?' said Granny.

'Do you remember the goblin messenger out in the storm last night?'

'What about him? Get on with it, you little zit!'

'He brought us a message saying that Prince

Grogbah was coming to stay,' I said. 'He arrived about an hour ago.'

'Prince Grog-who?' Granny grunted.

'Prince Grogbah. He's heir to the throne of the Barrow Goblins.'

'Those underlings,' Granny said. I could picture her grimacing up in her tower. 'What on earth are they doing here? Barrow Goblins never come above the ground, let alone visit a hotel so close to a human town. The smell of people turns their stomachs.'

'He's already made that pretty clear,' I sighed.

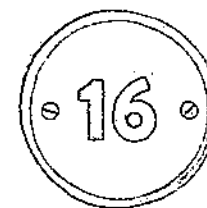
'Something's not right,' Granny mumbled.

'Can't you come down?' I asked. There was no way a teeny goblin would mess with the likes of her, even if he was a prince and had an army of guards with curvy swords.

'Abso-BLUNKIN-lutely not!' Granny said. 'I'm snug as a bundle of bugs up here! You all let him in so you can take care of this mess yourselves. Just stamp on the little twerp.'

I groaned into the yell-a-phone as loudly as I could.

'But, boy ...' Granny's voice stopped me just before. I turned away. 'Keep an eye out. There's no way Barrow Goblins would come above ground without a very, very good reason. Something sneakerish is going on.'



FROM BAD TO WORSE

After some more frantic searching, I found the bottles of frog grog stashed in a box at the top of the cellar steps, grabbed as many as I could carry and hurried back to the reception hall.

I couldn't get the sight of poor Nancy surrounded by guards out of my head. What had we done, letting a tiny, pumpkin-sized maniac into the hotel?

With any luck, his bubble bath in the fountain would have cheered Grogbah up and he'd be quietly relaxing instead of barking crazy orders at everyone.

I rounded the corner by the dining room, walked through the archway that lead into reception and ...

I stopped and gawped at the scene in front of me. How had this happened? I'd only been gone fifteen minutes!

The reception hall was in total chaos. Everywhere I looked, Barrow Goblins were clattering about, upturning furniture and smashing vases.

Dad was standing near a group of lounging goblin-wives, wearing rags just like the other goblin servants. He was holding a fan made from an old broom handle and some sheets of newspaper.



'Waft us, slave!' they snapped at him, with sour expressions. Dad flapped the fan back and forth with a look of complete disbelief on his face.

'GROOOOOOR!' Hoggit howled as he scampered past with the Royal Shouter riding on his back. My poor little dragon bucked this way and that to shake the rotten old turnip off, but the Royal Shouter was gripping onto his ears and stayed put.

The dust pooks were rattling across the floor with silver trays of snacks balanced on their heads, and—

'MUM!' I gasped, nearly dropping the bottles of frog grog.

My poor mum was in the middle of the hall, by the fountain with the belly-dancing goblinettes, wearing one of their jingly-jangly tops and skirts. How had they found one to fit?

She looked at me in horror as she tried to copy the dance steps of the other goblin ladies. Mum REALLY took customer service and pleasing guests far too seriously sometimes.

'Don't even think about it, **WHELPLING!**' Grogbah yelled as I darted towards Mum.

I looked up at the goblin prince. He was standing on the top of a pile of torn books from the library, still BUTT NAKED, and brandishing one of Dad's golf clubs.

'What fun!' he laughed, pointing at poor Mr Croakum. A few of the musician goblins had tied the end of his long tongue round the banister rail and were plucking away at it, as if it was the string of a double bass.

'This is the best time I've had in yonkers!' Grogbah said. He swung the golf club over his head, let go of it and cooed with glee as it sailed across the room and smashed through one of the windows by the front door.

It was all too much to take in. Goblins were sliding down the railings of the spiral staircase, and swinging from the lights. One was even throwing darts at the big painting of Great-great-great-grandad Abraham that hung with all the framed reviews above the reception desk.

If they kept this up for much longer, there wouldn't be a hotel left.

It was at that moment that a noise filled the reception hall and every goblin dropped what they were doing and stood still.