

Belief

The goblins didn't want to tell me where their Market was this week. Turns out, though, that they also didn't want to be shoved through a mailbox slot. Yes, the hole is too small for even a goblin to fit through. It only took one try to make that point to the survivors.

"Let me explain. ...No, there is too much. Let me summarize." Humans **are** clever, damn them for it. To summarize: I am a troll: yes, like in the stories. I feed off of children. Somebody stole one from me, and if I do not find the child almost immediately, then whoever did that will have gotten away with stealing a child from me and *I will not have that happen*. There is a hierarchy in place, and I sit near the top of that hierarchy, and child-takers are far enough below me that they're not even allowed to **look** at me. Also: I'm currently hungry, and I'm only going to get hungrier until I find the child. Do people understand enough about my motivations now?

Excellent. Back to my impromptu attempt to mail a goblin. The remainder fell all over themselves to tell me where their Goblin Market was this week. So I stomped the remaining goblins - some might even wake up, later - shouldered my bag, and went looking for it.

Don't know of the Goblin Market? A clever bastard Human wrote [about it once](#), locked it down for a hundred years, and the Goblins still can't quite get out from under what she wrote - because what a Human believes about a monster strongly enough, *happens*. Even more so now than before, from my point of view. There are now fewer things that everybody believes in, so there are now more nooks and crannies for monsters like myself. And like the Goblins, who still tempt unattended Human young into the Market... only now the Humans never get to leave. The cages see to that.

What? I'm not a policeman. I'm a giant, possessive monster with a tendency towards violence against deserving targets (and hungry; don't forget that). It's not my job to go around the world righting wrongs. If you want somebody to do that, try reading more adventure stories to your children. Weapons training would be a good idea, too. For that matter, surprisingly few people know how to blow things up properly.

But I, as the Humans *also* say, digress. The Goblin Market was as much a depressing, disgusting place as you'd imagine: a warren of stalls and carts and suspicious-looking bags. And, of course, the slave market, which was being run out of the back of a few pickup trucks. I envy the goblins that; it would be nice to be able to drive. It's not a Cold Iron thing: I don't really mind steel at all. It's that the Humans don't make cars that really **fit** me.

Still digressing, sorry. Anyway, the nice thing about a slave market is that it's only one pissed-off (and hungry!) troll and a sack full of stolen pistols away from being a slave revolt. And goblins are not immune to guns; oh my, no, they are not. Not that every one of the Human slaves immediately got with the idea of shooting up the place, but enough did that the rest caught on. Which was the idea; it gave me time to have a chat with the slave auctioneer.

I'll skip over the parts where I demonstrated that a code of professional ethics doesn't really help you deal with the sudden sight of steaming entrails - goblins breed fast, so there's always a few around to act as a handy visual aid - and just jump ahead to when the auctioneer finally realized that help would not arrive before I ran out of other goblins to negotiate with. If this was an adventure story, then the Human child would have already been stolen, forcing me to keep moving and having *another* adventure; fortunately, this was real life, so my quarry was merely being softened up for later resale.

Ha. **Merely**. ‘Softened up’ meant a Witch. A monster-witch, not a Human witch; Humans may have this great trick of *believing* in stuff, but it’s one of only two magical tricks that they have. And this witch didn’t want to just stop doing her job and transfer custody; nope, she had to be a heroine, for a given value of ‘heroine.’ I didn’t even get the chance to talk to her before she threw the whammy on me... is that the right word?

To be fair, this particular whammy was a good one; as you might have noticed, trolls groove on violence. It fuels us, makes us tougher and stronger. So it’s actually usually pretty smart to get rid of us by blocking our connection with our violent natures; it makes us shear off and run away. Only problem for the witch was, I was still **hungry**. Which meant that I was still motivated to hit her with a baseball bat... and even if I wasn’t as strong as I usually was, you don’t need to be all **that** strong. Humans hit each other with bats all the time, right?

But that was unimportant. What was important is that with the witch eating the floor, the violence was back, which meant that I could break the lock that was between me and my quarry (and, sure, the locks that held the rest of the brainwashing suspects. I still had some guns to hand out, and to Hell with the goblins anyway). **Finally**. Because I was, as I keep telling you, *hungry*.

The child woke up pretty quick - I pick ‘em for a certain amount of toughness - and then he saw me. And then, by all gods and goddesses real and imaginary, he **believed**. He absolutely, totally, and completely **believed** that I was real. I absorbed that belief until I was almost drunk on it; I’ve never been in a situation where a Human believed in me more than I could sustain, but if that’s even possible, I think that I was pretty close to it happening then. I certainly stopped being hungry at that point... so it was just a matter of bringing the child back to where his parents could find him, and trust that the Humans’ magical ability to **forget** things, too, would nicely obscure his recollection.

...What? I didn't say that I **ate** children. I merely feed off of them. I'm a *monster*, not evil.

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