



## *Goblin Quest (Preview)*

by Jim C. Hines



*Goblin Quest Preview*

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**Goblin Quest**

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*Jim C. Hines*

"We may be outnumbered. They may have magic and muscle on their side. But we're goblins! We're tough, we're mean, and we're more than a match for a few so-called heroes. Some of us will die, but for the survivors, this will be a victory to live forever in goblin memories."

—*Goblin captain (name unknown), shortly before his death by multiple stab wounds to the back.*

## Chapter 1

### *Muck Duty*

Jig hated muck duty.

He didn't mind the actual work. He liked the metallic smell of the distillation room, where week-old blood and toadstool residue dried in their trays. He never complained about having to scrape the pans as clean as possible and mix the residue with boiled fat, spider webs, and a dark green broth that smelled of rotting plants. He liked the way it all went from a lumpy soup to a smooth, gelatinous slime as he forced his stirring stick around and around in the giant bowl.

Walking around with the muck pot hanging awkwardly from his shoulder as he doled out gobs of the slow-burning stuff wasn't so bad either. True, if he got careless, it would be easy to splatter a bit of muck onto his skin. Even when it wasn't lit, the mixture could raise blisters in a matter of seconds. When burning, the yellow and green flames were almost impossible to extinguish, which was why they used muck to light the lair. But Jig was careful, and unlike most muck-workers, he had survived for several years with all of his fingers intact.

Jig would have been perfectly happy if he weren't the only goblin his age who still got stuck with muck duty. It was a job for children. Goblins Jig's age were supposed to be warriors, but the few times Jig had gone on patrol had only sealed his reputation as the clumsy runt of his generation.

He adjusted the thin handle on his shoulder. The goblin lair held forty-six fire bowls. Each one was little more than a hole in the dark red obsidian of the walls, with a palm-sized depression at the bottom to hold two days' worth of muck. Jig squinted at the fourth fire bowl, the last in the corridor that led out of the distillation room and into the main cavern.

To Jig, the flame was nothing but a blur. He could bring the fire into better focus by squinting, but that required him to put his face closer to the fire than he liked. The triangle of flame flickered as his breath touched it. The bowl was nearly empty. Whoever made the rounds yesterday had been lazy, and Jig would have to relight many of the bowls before he was done.

"Lazy children," he muttered angrily. He dipped a metal spatula into the muck pot and carefully scooped out a large blob. This he scraped into the dying fire bowl, where the flame whooshed and grew as it touched new fuel. He scraped as much muck from the spatula as he could, then extinguished it in the sack of sand on his belt. It wouldn't do to return a still-burning spatula to his pot.

He passed into the main cavern, a roughly circular, high-ceilinged cave of hard obsidian. The walls felt greasy to the touch, the polish of the rock hidden beneath years of grime. While the muck fires gave off very little smoke, several centuries of "very little" had led to a blackened, soot-covered ceiling. The sweaty odor of five hundred goblins mixed with the powerful scent of Golaka's cooking. Jig's mouth began to water as he smelled a batch of pickled toadstools boiling in Golaka's great cauldron.

Jig kept close to the wall as he worked. The faster he could finish his duties, the sooner he could eat.

But the other goblins weren't going to make things easy. Five or six large goblins stood bunched around the closest fire bowl, watching him. Jig's pointed ears twitched. He was too nearsighted to make out who was waiting there, but he could hear their amused whispers. Porak and his friends. This was going to hurt.

He thought about starting with the other side of the cavern. If he worked his way around to Porak's spot, which would take at least an hour, maybe they would get bored and go away.

"And maybe Porak will make me honorary captain of his patrol," Jig muttered. More likely they would circle around to meet him, and whatever they planned would be worse for having to make the effort.

Jig hunched lower and walked toward the group. Most of them were still eating, he noticed, and he tried to ignore his hunger. Porak grinned as Jig approached. Long fangs curved up toward his eyes, and his ears quivered with amusement. Several of his friends chuckled. Nobody moved out of the way.

"Cousin Jig. Muck duty, is it?" Porak asked. He scratched his bulbous nose with a clawed finger. "How long before you're ready for *real* work?"

"Real work?" He kept out of their reach, ready at any moment to continue the long goblin tradition of running away.

"Glory, fighting, and bloodshed." The goblins puffed up like rock lizards competing for a mate. Porak smiled, a warning sign if ever there was one. "We want you to come along on patrol."

"I can't." He held up the muck bucket. "I've barely started."

Porak laughed. "That can wait until they mix up a new batch of muck, one that hasn't been contaminated."

Jig watched Porak closely, trying to guess what that laugh meant. "The muck is fine," he said cautiously.

Fingers seized Jig's arms from behind. He squealed and twisted, but that

only made the claws dig deeper. Stupid! He had been so intent on Porak that he ignored the others. "What are you doing?"

Porak held up a black rat by the tail. "Look at that," he said. "I don't know who's more frightened, the rat or the runt."

The goblins laughed as the rat flipped and jumped, trying to free itself. Jig forced himself to relax. They wanted him to struggle like the rat.

Porak stepped closer. "Everyone knows rat fur makes the fire bowls smell awful. A shame someone let this one into the mix."

The rat struggled harder, prompting more laughter. The hands holding Jig relaxed. As fast as he could, Jig grabbed his spatula and flicked muck over his shoulder. A few drops landed on his arm, and he cringed as the skin blistered. But the goblin behind him took a far worse splash in the face. He howled and tried to wipe the muck off.

Had Jig been in a better mood, he would have reminded his captor that wiping would only spread the muck around. A louder howl told him the goblin had figured that out for himself.

The laughter of the others had only grown at this display. Jig glanced around for the easiest escape route, but before he could flee, Porak lunged forward.

"Not so fast, cousin." He dropped the panicked rat into the muck pot. "Meet us for duty in two hours. Don't make me come find you."

The rat clawed toward the edge of the pot. Half its body was trapped in the muck, and its squeals grew higher as the muck burned through the fur. Jig couldn't have saved it if he wanted to. Even if the pain-crazed rat escaped, all it took was one open flame and Jig would have a frantic, flaming rat on his hands.

"Sorry about this." He put the spatula into the pot and grabbed his weapon, an old kitchen knife with a loose blade. Not much, but enough to put the rat out of its misery.

He cleaned off the blade, being extra careful to make sure no muck remained, then tucked it back into the sheath on his rope belt.

Well, at least he wasn't on muck duty anymore. This was what he wanted, right? He was going on patrol. A clear step up in the world. So why wasn't he happier? Goblins spent years waiting for the day they could go from lighting fire bowls to helping protect the lair from adventurers.

Maybe that was it. Odds were, if you spent long enough looking for adventurers, sooner or later you were going to find some. Adventurers didn't fight fair. They brought magic swords and rings, wizards and spells, and warriors who cut through goblin patrols as quickly as Golaka's spicy rat dumplings passed through the old chief.

Which reminded him, he still had a rat to dispose of. He headed for the kitchens.

Golaka herself was gone, but one of her helpers was there, chopping up an unidentifiable animal who had made the mistake of snooping around in the tunnels. Jig tossed the muck-soaked rat onto a nearby table.

"What are you doing with that slimy thing?"

Jig projected innocence as hard as he could. With a shrug, he said, "One of the others stole it from the kitchen. They wanted me to give it back before you noticed, so they wouldn't get in trouble."

The goblin poked at the greasy, shiny rat with a fork. "That's muck! We can't eat that." His eyes narrowed. "Who was snooping around the kitchen, anyway?"

Jig shook his head. "Porak said he'd kill me if I told." He covered his mouth and tried to look stupid. "Oops."

"Porak, was it? Golaka will want to get her hands on that one."

"Can I go now?" Jig slipped out of the kitchen without waiting for an answer. As he crossed the main cavern, he allowed himself to smile.

Surface-dwellers had an expression about the wrath of the gods. Since goblins didn't really care for gods, they had an alternate expression—they called it the wrath of the chef.

"Rat or the runt' indeed," Jig said with satisfaction.

#

Jig stopped by the privies on his way to meet Porak and the others. Waiting until nobody was looking, he knelt and grabbed a red-spotted spider the size of his hand. The spider crawled up his arm and onto his head. It gave one of Jig's ears a sharp nip before settling into his hair.

"Ow." Jig rubbed his ear. "Stupid fire-spider."

Smudge, the stupid fire-spider in question, ignored Jig's complaint. He was probably upset that Jig had neglected him all day. But since taking Smudge along on muck duty would have been unwise, Jig refused to feel guilty. The last thing he had needed was a spider who grew hot when he sensed danger. If Smudge had been around when that goblin surprised Jig from behind, they all could have gone up in flames.

Jig met the others near the cavern exit. Of the twelve goblins, Jig was easily the smallest, and he tried to avoid the worst of the shoulder-punching and mock fighting.

"Ah, Jig, there you are." Porak grinned. "Jig's going to be joining us tonight."

Unfriendly laughter spread through the group, and Jig forced himself not to cringe. Everything was going to be fine. He just had to prove himself. He could do this.

"Should we grab something to eat first?" someone asked.

"No." Porak's smile slipped, and Jig kept his face still to hide his

amusement. "I think we'll avoid the kitchens tonight."

Jig wondered if anyone else guessed the origin of Porak's black eye. Not that he was going to tell them.

"Let's go," Porak ordered, cutting off any protests.

They passed through a long tunnel until they reached an old glass statue of a goblin, the marker that defined the edge of goblin territory. It had stood there for generations, and was probably as old as the mountain itself. Nobody knew who had carved the statue. Being goblins, nobody particularly cared, either. A big rock would have marked the spot equally well.

Two large goblins stood guard, if boasting about their latest sexual conquests could be considered standing guard.

Jig shivered as they passed into neutral territory. He hoped nobody had seen, but he couldn't help it. The underground inhabitants divided these tunnels amongst themselves. The goblins held the southern warrens. The larger hobgoblins took the warmer caverns to the west, farther from the entrance. Past the hobgoblins was the cold lake of the lizard-fish.

The lizard-fish were the worst, and goblins avoided them if they could. When food grew scarce, the chief would occasionally send goblins to the lake to hunt. This served two purposes. While the white-eyed creatures weren't pretty to look at, they *were* edible, and food was food. Since several of the hunting party usually managed to prick themselves on the lizard-fish's poisonous spines, these hunting parties also resulted in less mouths to feed.

Fortunately, the lizard-fish couldn't leave the lake, and an uneasy truce kept the hobgoblins out of goblin territory. Simple fear kept the goblins from trespassing in hobgoblin territory.

Jig glanced back at the statue. *That* was a true goblin warrior, one who had supposedly killed no less than three humans before an angry mage turned him into a green stain on the wall. Made of molded, and in many places chipped, black glass, he was as tall as most humans, with huge fangs that nearly touched his eyes. The nose was round like a lakestone, and his single eye was narrow and mean. A glass rag covered the other eye, which stories said had been lost to a human's sling stone. His ears were perked and wide, alert to the slightest sound. He was a *real* goblin, and even Porak paled in comparison.

Jig barely came to the statue's shoulder. His only scar was a torn ear, and that "battle" had been with another goblin who wanted to rip off Smudge's legs for fun. Jig's arms and legs were like thin sticks, and his constant squint was nothing like the mean glare most goblins wore. On top of that, his voice was too high, and he had some sort of fungus growing on his toenails.

"Torches," Porak ordered.

"This is dumb," Jig grumbled as one of the others handed out torches.

"Why not run ahead to warn any intruders that we're coming? Maybe we should



sing, too, in case they're blind."

Yellow nails closed on the blue-green skin of Jig's shoulder, and he yelped. Smudge grew warm and scampered to Jig's other shoulder.

"Because, young Jig, we're going to send a scout ahead to make sure everything is clear." Porak wasn't smiling. "That's called tactics." He raised his voice so the others could hear.

"You have to be smart to stay alive down here. Look at our cousin Jig, talking to himself and so distracted that I walked right up without him noticing. If I were a human, I could have killed our scout while he babbled. Then where would we be?"

Jig cringed as the others laughed and nodded. So much for proving himself.

"We have to be alert. We have to be strong. We have to be tough." With each pronouncement, Porak's grip tightened, so that by the end, Jig squirmed to get away.

"You hear me?" Porak glared at Jig. "You have to be tough." He shoved Jig into the wall.

With a harsh laugh, he added, "But even the weak have their uses. This one's going to run ahead to flush out any game. Our own little hunting dog."

Porak pulled out a set of dice, which brought cheers from the others. "We'll stay here, to protect the lair. If you find anything, we'll be along to do the fighting. All you have to do is stay alive long enough for us to rescue you. Go get 'em, dog."

The other goblins quickly picked up the chant, some barking while others punched and kicked at him. Jig covered his head and ran, Porak's loud voice following after.

"If you see anyone, make sure you scream before they kill you."

Jig's bare feet slapped against the tunnel floor. His ears burned as he put distance between himself and the others, but their jeers seemed to follow on his heels.

"Do we really want to send a runt to do a dog's job?"

"Scrawny bitch, isn't it?"

At least now Jig understood what was going on. He knew why he had been chosen to go with the patrol tonight. They wanted him to check the tunnels so they could play their games. This way they could carouse through the night without, technically, ignoring their duty.

Actually, it wasn't a bad idea, which made Jig suspect someone other than Porak had come up with it. Porak was tough and mean, but he would lose a battle of wits with his own shadow.

Jig reached up to make sure Smudge was still there. He scratched one of the spider's legs as he walked. "Too bad I can't teach you to burn on command. I'd

love to slip you into Porak's trousers one of these nights."

He reconsidered. Some things were too evil even for a goblin. He couldn't do that to poor Smudge.

"If Porak were smart, he would have brought me in on his plan. How does he know I won't tell the chief what he's up to?" Jig stopped to rest for a minute. "No, even Porak isn't that stupid. If he gets in trouble, he'll know who told. Next time he'll put *me* into the muck pot."

He extinguished his torch on the floor and started walking again, taking a left at the first fork, then two rights. He let his ears and his memory guide him through the dark tunnels.

"Maybe I could blackmail him instead. Threaten to tell the chief if Porak doesn't do what I want." He grinned. Porak was big and important. If Jig could get Porak on his side, life would get a lot nicer. No more sleeping by the entrance, where the draft froze his feet every night. No more waiting at the end of the food line so that his meal was nothing but bones, gristle, and the occasional lump of fat.

"No more getting sent ahead on patrol while the others gamble."

Maybe he'd even get a real sword instead of the stupid kitchen knife he carried now. He pulled the knife out of his belt and swung at an imaginary foe. He could almost hear the hiss of the broadsword. He ducked, thrust, and attacked again.

"Help me," Porak would say as two adventurers backed him into a corner. Jig grinned and crossed the tunnel to rescue his captain. He took one adventurer from behind. The other was meaner. He put up quite a fight before Jig's sword caught him in the chest. Jig raised his weapon in triumph as the adventurer gasped and died. Back in the lair, everyone would talk about his heroic battle. They would ask him to lead patrols of his own, and say things like—

"Be patient, lad. You've gone and made me lose count. I'll have to start again."

Jig jumped. The reality of his small kitchen knife replaced his daydreams of battle and luxury. He pressed himself against the wall and swiveled his ears forward to better hear the voices ahead.

"By all the gods, do not allow me to interfere, oh wise one. Perhaps you'd like to wait while I summon a calligrapher to assist you. And you'll want an artist to paint another scene of old Earthmaker."

"Enough. We're not going anywhere until I finish my map, and I'll not be able to do that until you get out of my way."

Jig clutched his knife in both hands. Two voices. The first one sounded old and gravelly. The second was definitely human.

So what should he do? Screaming was out of the question, despite Porak's orders. Sure, it would alert the others about the intruders. It would also alert the

intruders about Jig. That was a problem. Humans had longer legs, and therefore longer strides, so Jig's chances of making it back to the other goblins were slim.

He knew how long he would last against real warriors. About as long as the average fly lasted once Smudge trapped it in his web.

Speaking of Smudge, Jig didn't know if the fire-spider could sense Jig's own anxiety, or if he had heard the intruders down the tunnel, but the top of Jig's head was growing uncomfortably warm.

"It's okay. Don't worry." Jig backed away from the voices as quietly as he could. His free hand went up to pet the spider.

That turned out to be a mistake. Smudge apparently didn't see Jig's hand coming, and when his fingers touched the spider's fuzzy thorax, Smudge curled into a frightened ball. With an audible whoosh, Jig's hair lit up like oil-soaked rags.

The knife clattered to the floor. Smudge leapt away. Jig yelped and tried to beat out the flames. Crazy shadows danced on the walls and floor, and he spotted Smudge racing toward the opposite wall. "Stupid spider," he shouted. He wasn't worried about the intruders anymore. Not with his hair ablaze. If they caught him, maybe they'd at least extinguish his head before they killed him.

"Ow, ow, ow." He smacked at the flames, trying not to burn his hands. The fire had died down when Smudge fled, and Jig soon managed to put himself out. Unfortunately, the blaze had taken most of his hair with it. His scalp was tender and blistered, but he didn't seem to be bleeding.

Jig leaned against the wall and closed his eyes, trying to block out the pain. "What's the matter with you?" he whispered in Smudge's general direction. "You have eight eyes. Eight! How could you not see my hand? I'm the blind one. What were you doing up there, daydreaming? I should let Golaka make a pot pie out of you."

Smudge skittered back and climbed up his leg. As he reached Jig's waist, Jig snagged him and lifted him to eye-level. The spider waved his legs and pincers, almost like he had understood Jig's halfhearted threat. Which was possible, Jig admitted. The spider was at least as smart as Porak. "That's the last time I bring you along on patrol."

Smudge's head and legs drooped.

With a disgusted sigh, Jig set the spider on his shoulder. "Just try not to set me on fire again, okay?"

Only then did it occur to Jig to wonder why he could see everything so well. His own aborted blaze had lit the tunnel well enough, but it should have ruined his dark-vision. In fact, if it weren't for the torchlight behind him, he would be completely blind.

His first theory was that Porak and the others had come to see what was wrong. But they would have started laughing at Jig's misfortune. Since Jig heard

no laughter, whoever had come up behind him wasn't a goblin. What was the expression surface-dwellers used at times like this?

"Oh, dung." He turned around.

It was the human he had heard earlier. In one hand, the human held a blazing torch. The other pointed a long sword at Jig. A long, gleaming, very sharp sword. Jig bet the blade didn't wobble in its handle, either.

"Draw a weapon or cry out for aid and you'll never draw breath again."

Jig blinked. What was he going to do, scramble for his kitchen knife? He should probably call for help though. Porak's orders. He had to warn the others. It was his duty.

It was an awfully big sword.

"A wise choice. Turn around, and walk into that room up there."

The human followed him to the room Jig had always thought of as the shiny room. Tiny glass tiles, no larger than his fingernails, covered the entire ceiling in sparkles of color. The ceiling domed upward, and the swirls of blue, green, and red all merged into a spectacular fireburst at the center.

Even with a sword at his back, Jig couldn't help but look up as he entered. The adventurers had a small fire going, and the reflected firelight danced on the tiles, turning them into a thousand jewels.

"What's this?" It was the gravelly voice Jig had heard earlier, and it came from a four-foot tall mountain of muscle, armor, and tangled black hair. In other words, a dwarf.

"I found him snooping up yonder passage." The human sheathed his sword. "Not much of a spy. He set himself aflame in his panic."

The dwarf laughed. In barely understandable Goblin, he asked "You lived here long?" Without waiting for an answer, he jumped to his feet and waved a large sheet of parchment in Jig's face. "We've got ourselves a room here that's thirteen and a half paces by twelve paces with a door in each wall. I don't suppose you'd be knowing which of those doors will take us to the deep tunnels?"

Jig shook his head and backed into a corner. "I was lost myself," he lied.

The human laughed again. "Probably true, Darnak. Even for a goblin, he has the look of a kitchen drudge. Perhaps a bit thick in the head as well."

Darnak shook his head. "I've thought the same of you from time to time, Barius Wendelson. That doesn't make you any less dangerous."

"How dare you speak to me in such tones?" All traces of mirth vanished from Barius's face. He started to take a step forward, but Darnak beat him to it, leaving him with one foot in the air and no place to put it if he didn't want to step on the dwarf.

"I've known you since you were a stripling," Darnak said, grabbing an iron-banded club and waving it under Barius's nose. "Prince or no, I'll still crack your skull if need be."

While they bickered, Jig took the opportunity to look around. He had no doubt that their quarrel would end instantly if he tried to run, but at least he could get a better idea what he was up against.

The human was . . . polished was the best word Jig could come up with. His chain mail gleamed silver, every link a mirrored ring. The jeweled hilt of his sword was wrapped in gold wire, and the pommel had been molded into the shape of a lion's head. His knee-high boots were soft black leather, and the purple velvet tights looked as expensive as the rest of the outfit. They also looked ridiculous and uncomfortable, but who was Jig to criticize human fashion?

Barius was strong, broad in the shoulders and trim around the waist. What Jig had first taken to be a black hat was actually his hair, cut in a perfectly straight circle around his head. His goatee was trimmed into a point so sharp you could use it for a weapon.

The dwarf looked the meaner of the two. The scale mail he wore under his white robe appeared battered but well cared for. Jig could see where many of the scales had been replaced over time. Likewise, his war club was nicked in several places, as though it had turned aside sword blades or crushed more than a few skulls. As for Darnak himself, a black tangle of hair hid most of his face. His skin was a leathery brown color. A crooked nose, almost as large as a goblin's, poked over a bushy moustache and beard. Jig could see two piggish eyes hidden beneath caterpillar brows.

Jig saw a third member to their party as he looked around. A skinny elf sat by the fire with his knees to his chest. He ignored the argument, the goblin, everything but the flames. His old trousers and torn shirt were poor as Barius's clothes were fine, and his red hair was cut short and ragged. His face was odd, and it took several seconds for Jig to figure out why. Surface types insisted on wearing at least eight layers of clothing, which made Jig wonder how many hours they spent dressing themselves. All of those clothes made it harder to tell, but if he wasn't mistaken, "he" was actually a "she."

What her role in the group was, Jig hadn't a clue. She was clearly the least threatening, but she could still be dangerous. She looked nothing like the graceful, slender elves of legend. For a second, he wondered if she might be some subrace he had never heard of. He knew there were different types of elves: forest elves, mountain elves, and so on. But urchin elves?

"So what do we do with him, Your Majesty?" Darnak asked.

That caught Jig's full attention. Since the elf was a she, there was only one "him" they could be talking about.

"Safest to slay him," Barius said slowly. "Though perhaps he could be of use to us. Idiot or no, he knows more of these tunnels than we do. At worst, he can precede us to lull the suspicions of any creatures we encounter. Still, I dislike the idea of a goblin in our group."

Jig crossed his arms and clung to hope. As long as he was alive, there was still a chance. Porak and the others might still find him. The other goblins were armed, and they outnumbered the intruders four to one. Even goblins might triumph at those odds. All they had to do was come looking. If they bothered to notice Jig hadn't come back. If they weren't too caught up in their games. If they had the brains to figure out what was going on.

Jig groaned and sat down on the floor. He was, without a doubt, a dead goblin.

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Author's Note:

I hope you've enjoyed this preview of *Goblin Quest*. I've always been fond of poor Jig, and I'm very grateful to DAW Books for giving me the chance to introduce you all to him.

Please feel free to share this preview with anyone who might be interested. And stop by my website at <http://www.jimchines.com> for the latest news about *Goblin Quest* and future books. *Goblin Hero* is currently set for a May, 2007 release, and I'm working hard to finish up the first draft of *Goblin War*.

If you're moved to pick up a copy of the book, I'd encourage you to support your local independent bookstores. If you prefer to shop online, [Amazon](#) and [Barnes & Noble](#) both carry the book as well.

Thanks for reading!

Jim C. Hines  
November, 2006

Jim C. Hines

## Praise for *Goblin Quest*

"Jim Hines' *Goblin Quest* is a rollicking ride, enjoyable from beginning to end. Jig is a fresh, engaging hero, for a goblin, and takes readers through a whirlwind of magic and adventure that never once fails to entertain and amaze. Hines has just become one of my must-read authors!"

-Julie E. Czerneda, Author of the *Species Imperative Trilogy*

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"Hines takes us up close and personal with goblins and dungeon adventurers, in a light-hearted but VERY insightful quest tale. *Goblin Quest* is a hilarious 'good read.' One of the funniest dungeon-delving epics ever!"

-Ed Greenwood, Author of *Elminster: the Making of a Mage*

#

"Jim C. Hines has given us a wonderful adventure from the goblin's point of view, and it's fantastic! I haven't had this much fun reading a book in ages. I can't wait to buy a copy for my stepson, who keeps asking what I'm laughing so hard about."

-Wil Wheaton, Actor & Author of *Just a Geek*

#

"*Goblin Quest* is a fun, enjoyable read. Role reversal and jibes at the genre make Jig not only a sympathetic character, but seemingly the only sane one there for the reader to identify with. Of course, if you read this book and drive your spouse into fits of annoyance listening to you snort and giggle at the absurdity the author continually throws at poor Jig, don't blame me. I merely said it was a great book."

-Paul Haggerty, *SF Revu*

#

"This clever satire is based on fantasy role-playing — something veteran gamers will get a huge kick out of. Reminiscent of Terry Pratchett and Robert Asprin at their best, this is an over-the-top tale that sill manages to be genuinely touching, particularly the friendship between Jig the goblin and Riana the elf."

-Four star review from *Romantic Times*

*Goblin Quest Preview*

"Need a book that will make you smile, then grin, then laugh out loud? If your tickle spot's the same as mine, *Goblin Quest* is the book you're looking for. I love an unlikely hero and Jig the goblin is my kind of unlikely love! New kid Jim C. Hines is already an expert at the unlikely but lovable...who could beat Jig's pet/sidekick/companion animal Smudge, the fire-spider? Bonus 1: How to manage when your companion animal sets your hair on fire. Bonus 2: How to choose the right god to pray to. Bonus 3: Why you should never challenge a goblin to a duel. —I'm still laughing."

-Janet Kagan, Hugo-winning Author of *Hellspark & Uhura's Song*

#

"The book is funny, poignant, sometimes riffing off quest tales, other times plunging the reader into straightforward adventure. I loved Jig and his questions and discoveries, I loved the complexity of the others—including Straum, the dragon. Though this was a quest tale, Hines kept me guessing right until the very last page."

-Sherwood Smith, Author of *Inda & Crown Duel*

#

"*Goblin Quest* is a hilarious piece of work! It's confident, irreverent and laugh-out-loud funny: one of the easiest fantasy reads I've come across in a long time. Jim Hines has a unique voice...when you can hear it between the bouts of laughter, that is."

-John Kovalic, Creator/Author of *Dork Tower*

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"If you've always kinda rooted for the little guy, even maybe had a bit of a place in your heart for the likes of Gollum, rather than the Boromirs and Gandalfs of the world, pick up *Goblin Quest* — just make sure you keep well away from Golaka's stewpot."

-Dr. Georges T. Dodds, *The SF Site*

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"This book is fun for all ages. When I read portions aloud to my kids (who range from 5 - 12) they didn't want me to stop. *Goblin Quest* is a stunning first book that reads more like a fourth or fifth book."

-MarsDust