

# Imp Report the First

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Giant Tracking  
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Dear Sir, or Madam, or Mademoiselle, or Mister, or Master, or Missis, or Miss, or Miz, or Lord, or Highness, or Excellency, or other, as the case may be,

Hi! I'm an imp. No name, just my master's imp, and as I am not allowed to tell you anything about my master directly, just plain "imp" will do fine.

Hey, I've got some fun stuff to tell you! But I'm not allowed to tell you anything except what my master says in public. I may ask my master if I can say a few other things once in a while, but not too often or I may have to sign this letter "gimp" instead of "imp!" Hee hee hee! Oh, sorry, just a bit of impish humor there. Oops! didn't mean to let *that* slip out!

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"Allow me to introduce myself," intoned my master in her most impressive voice. "I am Kabeous Kohg, one of the most famous bounty hunters in the world"

"Bounty hunter?" The man she was speaking to was obviously not impressed. "I would have taken you more for a witch, myself."

"And I would have taken you for a Gobarian."

"Why, so I am! How did you know I was from Gobaria?"

My master waved off his question impatiently. "Why, then, did you claim you were a medic, rather than a Gobarian?"

"I am a medic!" he replied, somewhat hotly

"As am I a bounty hunter. Enough said. What did you want of me?"

The fellow seemed disinclined to reply. Sensitive fellow? I suspect so.

"Oh, come off it George," said one of the other men in the room. There were about two dozen of them in all, musty old codgers for the most part, seated at cheap wooded tables in a gloomy basement room instead of out in the glorious early winter snowfall. This man (the one I just said was speaking, naturally) turned to my master. Not a bad looking fellow, totally bald with a bulbous nose and sallow complexion, altogether the competent

sort who gets stuff done. Reminded me of a...oops, I nearly forgot. Hee hee, what a sight I'd make! Anyway. This guy was talking to my master, and this is what he said.

"We have a friend who became a giant some months ago and is currently lost. We want him found and returned to us if alive, or a report as to where and how he died if dead, and preferably his body as well."

One of the other men piped in here.

"I guess this isn't what you go for, finding people to help, not to kill?"

"Killing does not interest me," replied my master.

"But I thought you were a bounty hunter!"

"Are you inquiring into my motives for being a bounty hunter?" she asked, striding over to where the speaker sat and leaning towards him with her fingertips resting lightly on the table between them. A master at physical presence, is my master.

"No, no, I was just saying..."

"Yes? What were you saying?"

The sallow man spoke up again, my master sweeping toward him as he did so. "*I* would like to know your motives, Mrs. Kohg."

"Ah, here is the man that has the nerve to say what he means." My master smiled slightly and put her fingers together meditatively for a moment. "But don't call me Mrs. again. The proper title in human circles is 'Master', if a title is needed." After a period of apparent meditation she leaned over the speaker as she had the other man.

"You would like to know my motives, would you? Very well, bold one, I will tell you." Her was voice quiet and calm. "I care not for money. I care not for fame. Death, power, and sorcery mean nothing to me. All I do, all I have done, all I live for is for one reason. And do you know what that reason is?" As she said this she leaned further and further forward and spoke more and more quietly. After a dramatic pause she leapt backward, throwing up her arms in a flash of flash of light and a cloud of smoke, shouting in a voice like thunder

"I LOVE TO WIN!"

As the echo's died away, every eye stared in shock and awe to my master, who stood in a dramatic pose for a moment and then, giving a delicate cough, fanned her

face with her hand and said quietly, “Phew! but I don’t like that smoke. I really need to find a better spell than that. Imp,” this to me, but in public so I can record it safely, “make a note: ‘To do: Incorporate more aromatic smoke with punctuation spell.’”

“Then I have more one question for you,” said the sal-low fellow. “If you accepted a job to aid a cause, and you found the cause was failing, would you continue anyway, or would you desert and switch sides?”

“And I have a question for you,” replied my master. “If you were a rabbit without any teeth, would you continue to swallow vegetables whole or would you try living off of honey?”

“What?”

“Just answer the question.”

“I have no idea. I don’t know what it’s like to be a rabbit.”

“Precisely. Enough said.”

Here the first speaker chimed up again. “But you haven’t answered his...”

“I said ‘Enough said,’” interrupted my master, staring at him sharply. “If you cannot follow what is being discussed you will kindly keep your silence. Do you understand?”

The man cowered back in his seat, but didn’t say anything.

“I said, ‘do you understand.’ Answer me, man. Do you understand?”

“Yes”

“What is it you understand?”

“What you told me to do.”

My master stared at him for a moment, then shook her head and muttered “I only wish you did.”

Turning back to the sal-low fellow, my master brought the conversation back on track. “Your case intrigues me. I will hunt down your giant for only the moderate sum of...”

Hey, I’m going to stop here because pay and all that isn’t very interesting to us imps. We were given four magazines—three earlier editions of this journal and one called *The Enchanter*—a small advance payment, and directions to the city where the giant was last known to be.

We were next seen by a lone bullet with an old jawless cow skull. It hurled a stone right at my master’s head as soon as it caught sight of us, but the stone simply shattered like a...oh, wait, I can’t tell you what it shattered like, can I? Just trust me, it was smashed to bits without damaging my master.

Bullets don’t have very good eyesight. Come to think of it, I am not certain they even have eyes. Anyway, this

bullet started howling for help and bounded right up to us before it realized who my master was. Stopping suddenly, it called out

“Never mind! No danger after all!”

but it was too late. The entire tribe was on its way, and though bullets are easily riled they are not easily pacified. One of the younger bullets, who had not yet learned the who’s whom of the wild, actually sprang to attack my master, flashed brilliantly, and fell lifeless at my master’s feet.

My master sniffed delicately at the cloud of smoke this flashing generated. “Imp, what do you think of this smoke? A bit nicer than the punctuation stuff, isn’t it?”

I leaned way out from my perch on her shoulder and gave it a whiff. “Why, yes! It is a very warm smell,” I replied, licking my nose thoughtfully. “The hint of rosemary is an especially nice touch.”

“That’s from the rosemary bush next to us, imp.”

“No matter. It’s still nice. Rosemary always reminds me of boiled chicken, and I love boiled chicken!”

My master shrugged and turned to the crowd of bullets around us. “Of what tribe are you?” she asked.

“We are the tribe of Goadwatch, may it please you excellency,” replied a large bullet in the skull of some oversized rodent.

“I am looking for a tribe led lately by a small bullet with a human skull.”

There was a moment’s buzz among the bullets, then the same speaker asked,

“Do you mean the tribe of Guggenheim?”

My master smiled and inclined her head.

“They disbanded last summer.”

I felt my master’s shoulder tense beneath me at this news. “Why did they disband?”

There was another moment’s buzz and then a big bur-ley bullet in an eagle skull moved to the front of the crowd.

“We split when the boss came,” it said without any introduction.

“The boss?”

“Yeah. The boss.”

“What,” said my master in her ‘I’m getting slightly annoyed here’ voice, “is the boss?”

“Eh, you know. A leg-thing, like you. The broad sort, though, bald.”

“A human?”

“No. Like, see, it ain’t alive. Humans are.”

“What do you mean, it isn’t alive? Is it a zombie or something?”

“No, see, like this one was wooden. A statue.”

“A moving statue?”

“Yeah.”

“Tell me exactly what happened when it came. Don’t leave anything out.”

“Well, see, we was out hunting and we sees this guy coming, so we goes to kill him, like we did you, see? Only, he was made of wood and we couldn’t hurt him too bad. We ripped off his arm, like, but the arm kept on being alive too and strangling us. He killed a bunch of us and then we saw he was the boss, so we scat. I come over here, and that’s all.”

“Can you find exactly where this happened?”

“Sure.”

“You will take my imp there now. Imp, when you get there look for splinters, scoring, and other residual. Also, track it’s motions as far as two or three miles, if you can. I will meet you at the horn tomorrow.”

“Yes, master,” I replied and jumped to a perch on top of the eagle skull. The bullet immediately bounded away. Nothing else of note happened until the bullet left me, at which point I was no longer in public.

Our next public appearance was at a sheet-glass seller’s in Gobaria. My master discussed the price of tile glass, but made no purchase. While we were there I saw this guy that looked so much like a large yam that it reminded me of the song, “Yams and Honey for Ma,” which is one of my favorites. I thought maybe if I wrote this a few of you would get it stuck in your head and, by singing it, make the world a more pleasant place in which to have ears.

When we arrived in Gött, we were not met with a pleasant reception. There was about a foot of snow on the ground and more coming down, and my master looks her best in the snow, if you ask me. But the guards did not want us to come in. They weren’t foolish enough to actually forbid us entrance, but they did put up a lot of fuss.

When we finally got past the gates and into the city, we found the cold reception was general among all the inhabitants. However, it wasn’t very difficult to find the ruins, and there we met Mr. Gourley.

Mr. Gourley is not a human. He is a dwarf. Why this was not noted in the earlier articles, I have no idea. They could have mentioned it to prepare me for the shock. I mean, a *dwarf*? But I digress.

My master was walking around the perimeter of the ruins, staring intently at the snow-covered rubble, when Mr. Gourley came up to us.

“Ho, what’s all this?” he bellowed like some uncouth mastodon.

My master turned with dignity to look at the newcomer. “Mr. Gourley, I presume?”

“That’s me. Who’re you? What’re you doing here?”

“Kohg. Kabeous Kohg, in the employ of a number of area medics. Searching for your erstwhile neighbor.”

“Not another one!”

“Yes, Sampson, another one. Have there been many?”

“Ho, now. Sure, but most of them was just bumpkins. There was the *Proceedings* folk, I suppose, and that old sage guy, but mostly just bumpkins.”

“Old sage guy?”

“Well, I guess he weren’t really look’n’, like you are. He came by only a week after the incident, and seemed surprised he was gone. But still, he poked just like you are poking.”

“How do you mean, ‘just like’ me?”

“Well, he walked around the ruins in a wide circle, like you are. I guess that’s what reminded me of him just now—that similarity. I had actually forgotten about him till just now.”

“Do you remember what he looked like?”

“No, not really...” He scratched his head. “Like I said, I wouldn’t even have remembered he had come at all if you hadn’t been pacing just the way he did.”

My master stared at him hard, then relaxed and turned to me. “We could help him remember, but...”

“... he’s a dwarf,” I finished.

“Exactly. A dwarf.” But she was not done there.

“Mr. Gourley, Let us suppose he was a tall man,” (she grew taller as she said this), “thin, dark, with a deep grey cowled robe—” the look on Mr. Gourley’s face told her the robe wasn’t correct “—or rather, a cape, a habit, yes a habit, but with the hood down, and a round face, a long face, an oval face, a beard, a long beard, a short beard, a nice, trim beard, brown, blond, grey, red, a vivid red...” and so on.

By the time my master was done picking Mr. Gourley’s memory, she cut a most surprising figure. 6’5”, thin as a beanstalk, with a fire-red beard, almost completely bald, dressed in a ragged, too-short monk’s habit, barefoot. As she resumed her proper form, Mr. Gourley commented

“Ho, now, how could I have forgotten such a ridiculously memorable man?”

“You didn’t. We have recreated a caricature—just the form of memory, not the aspect of truth. However, I thank you for it; it will help me know what to search for in others’ minds.”

We spent a full day in Gött after that, but engaged in nothing outwardly of note, just chatted with folk a bit. We then left the town, and good riddance! Quite the scaly group of yokels they were.

A window in the door opened to my master's knock and a plump pink face presented itself.

"Wadder yer want?"

"An audience with Abbot Grensville," I replied, as my master had requested I do. "If you would be so kind as to inform him that Master Kohg is here to see him, we will await his response here."

"Grensville ain't abbot."

"Because he left the abbey last summer?" I asked.

"Yeh, how'ju know?"

"Master Kohg mentioned something of the sort. I am sure she would be happy to discuss the matter with your current abbot."

The pinkness regarded my master suspiciously for a bit, then said "Eh, waitchere," and withdrew, closing the window behind himself.

After several minutes he returned and opened the door. "Abbot Case'll see yer now," he said, gesturing us inside. "But mind'jer don't touch nothin' that don't belong to yer."

The squat pink monk with the delightfully refined speaking style led the way up a seemingly interminable spiral staircase, muttering under his breath and occasionally tripping on his robe. Quite the entertaining chap he was, gave me a good giggle. His robe kind of bunched up in the back and gave the impression of his having a stub of a tail which he wagged as he walked. . . Alas, when we got to the audience hall he did not enter with us, and we were left without his personal charm to accompany us.

The audience hall was a remarkably clean room. Floor, walls, ceiling, doors, chair—all were of the same smooth, polished white material. Kind of like being inside a cavity in a really clean tooth.

In the chair sat a very old monk in a light blue habit. He spoke directly the door had closed, his voice dripping with irony.

"Ah, Kabeous. So nice of you to drop by. We haven't seen much of you in these parts lately."

"Self-inflicted blindness tends to prevent seeing what goes on under your nose, father of the recluses."

"Indeed." The abbot rose to his feet and walked toward my master. "And yet you, the world-famous bounty hunter, come to the unseeing tower for information?"

"The tower had its time of seeing, Smirnoff, and not so long ago. We both know Grensville was a little too—shall we say involved?—for your tastes."

"Which is exactly why you wish to know of him."

My master made no reply to this observation. After a moment, Abbot Case turned and began to pace the room slowly, speaking as he went.

"Ah, Kohg, you know me too well. Our little run-in in the Ruins of Grain suited us both well—I forgot, you learned."

He paused for a while, musing. He then spun to face us and said,

"Alan left to speak with a medic friend of his about some magical bilge. He never returned. A week later we had a discussion in the abbey and I was reappointed abbot. You may now withdraw."

My master replied in a voice deathly quiet. "The privilege to leave is not in your power to grant, and I keep my own council as to when to exercise my rights, Smirnoff."

"What, do you think by staying you will find out what I do not know?"

My master stared at him for a moment, then said quietly, "Bilge?"

"I would never inquire into the prohibited practices of my abbot."

"Oh, come now. We both know Alan Grensville is somewhat loose with his tongue."

"Is? I don't think we know anything about the 'is' of the matter."

"Speak for yourself, and SPEAK! before I loose my patience!"

Abbot Case looked at my master defiantly for a moment, then seemed to crumple like a wad of paper. When he spoke again it was with down-turned eyes and a plaintive voice, strongly reminiscent of a whipped dog.

"Alan said he had found a group of golem tracking down a giant. He said they had slaughtered a group of gambado that were somehow related, and that he wanted to get the advice of a medic friend who had healed one of the gambados. He said he hoped the medic could tell him who the giant was, and why the golems were trying to find him. That's all I know."

After a few more inquiries it appeared that really was all the abbot knew. After quizzing a few of the other monks and learning nothing else of note, we left.

Okay, so we're about to go on a little intercontinental trip, and my master says if I want to publish this I have to send it today. We're actually still in my master's—er—residence, not in public, but my master admitted that I would need some sort of conclusion. I asked her what I could write, and here's what she said:

"Golems are very useful, but they are also easy to track. This evening we will begin our trip to the last noted location of the flesh golem, and from there into the desert."

So there it is. Hope to write again.

—*the imp of Kabeous Kohg*