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Goblins

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Editor's Choice:

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

5

All the best fantasy adventures start with a map and **Goblins** has a splendid one. In the lands of the west in the Bonehill mountains stands the forbidding fortress of Clovenstone, a black Keep at its centre, seven ruined towers round about that. The highest of these very high towers is Blackspike, and that is bad news for the goblin Skarper, because as the book opens he has just been catapulted off the top of it. Far fewer fantasies start with their main character falling through the sky, although it's not so much the falling that's bothering Skarper, it's the hitting the ground.

From this funny, surprising and exciting opening, Philip Reeve goes on to spin a hugely enjoyable and original fantasy adventure. Skarper, who is not only smarter than the average goblin, but much luckier, survives the catapulting and then, expelled from his familiar if filthy home, sets off to find somewhere else to live. On the way he meets all sorts of fabulous creatures including a giant, a troll, some cloud maidens, who help out with the falling through the sky bit, and some very prickly tree-warriors before reluctantly joining forces with Henwyn, a young cheesemaker out to make his fortune. There's a band of incompetent wizards too, and a princess, in her forties and all the better for it.

Their path will eventually lead Skarper and Henwyn back into Clovenstone and into the mysterious Keep itself for a nail-biting climax. Skarper has to confront the goblin king Knobbler and the sneaky power behind the throne Breslaw, while Henwyn has his own trial to withstand. There's a final starring role for the catapult too.

The book is full of clever nods to **Lord of the Rings** and shot throughout with Reeve's ingenuity, thoughtfulness and humour. It ends with the promise of more adventures for Skarper and Henwyn, a very tempting prospect indeed.

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