This is the first chapter of the first draft of my first novel. Hope you enjoy, and let me know what you think.

AND ALL OF THEIR FRIENDS

By Joel Holt

INTRODUCTION

 This story is inspired by the goblins from “The Hobbit” by Tolkien. The lines “They make no beautiful things but they make many clever ones.” and “It is not unlikely that they invented some of the machines that have since troubled the world, especially the ingenious devices for killing large numbers of people at once, for wheels and engines and explosions always delighted them,”. These two lines have always fascinated me. These are smart monsters. Not the stupid thugs you often read about in fantasy. These are smart evil monsters that hide in the shadows and darkness where humans fear to go. Could such a creature survive to the present day? If somehow they did, what would they be like?

 Its unfortunate Tolkien didn't describe the creatures better. He puts in a detail here and there, but he never really describes what they look like. To be clear these creatures are not Tolkien's goblins, just inspired by them. My story appears to be as much a political religious satire as it is a monster story. You are welcome to read and decide for yourself.

Monsters in your Closet

 In the back of many closets is a secret door. Don’t bother looking for it. It’s cleverly hidden. Besides, your closet might not have one. They prefer closets that look out on children’s bedrooms. If you’re a child who doesn’t sleep in a bedroom, you may be in luck. Also they only come out at night, because the daylight hurts their eyes. Leaving the lights on in your room won’t help. If they come for you, they’ll cut the power first. A good flashlight might help, but they’re fast and silent. They’ll be on you in an instant, pry the flashlight from your frightened grip and cover your mouth to stop you from screaming. They’ll whisk you through the secret door in your closet, into the elevator beneath your house or apartment. From there they’ll take you down deep into the earth, where you’ll never be heard from again.

“We our your friendsss,” they’ll say in that odd hissing speech of theirs. Indeed they love humans. Our children especially they consider tasty, particularly around the ages of three to six, and if they’re a little chubby that’s even better. If you’re an older child and get snatched, you might not be as lucky as the children who get eaten. They like humans for something else as well. Slaves. They are wicked cruel masters, who love to inflict pain, and will do so for the slightest infraction of their rules, or because they enjoy it. They love tormenting their slaves and driving them until they collapse from exhaustion. No slave ever escaped and lived to tell of it. Until two did, but be warned, their story is not for the faint of heart.

Chapter 1

The Knife

 “I’m not sure I should tell you about them because if they even suspect you know of their kind your life will be in danger. On the other hand if you’re like most people you won’t remember this conversation took place. Still one must never give up hope. Our Friends have many names. Ogres, Goblins, Demons to name a few. They’ve lived alongside us, since before recorded history. They’re drawings of them on the walls of Neanderthal caves. They are half blind in the sunlight, even with dark sunglasses, it’s their greatest weakness. It makes them slow and awkward during the day. At night they see very well indeed and can kill you like I’d step on a cockroach. Avoid them at night at all costs.

 Darryl yawned; he’d heard this story so many times it put him to sleep.

 “They disguise themselves with fake hair, fake skin, fake teeth, contacts for their eyes, anything to make them look human. Like putting glitter on a maggot. Sometimes their disguises itch, especially on hot days and you can see them scratching. Don’t count on this however, they have tremendous self-control. If you know what you’re doing you can feel them. Like the aftertaste in diet soda, or nasty sweet taste of cough syrup. They can fake human emotions like kindness and love, but they don’t understand them, and they can’t feel them for real.” The old man poked at his fire with a metal poker.

 His ten year old grandson Darryl Alexander Hammond wasn’t listening. He was used to his grandfather’s ramblings, besides he’d found a cool knife. It was six inches long from handle to tip; it looked like it had been hammered out of one piece of metal, with dark brown leather string wrapped around the handle for a grip. The blade was covered with old runes he didn’t recognize but looked Celtic. He cut his finger testing the blade and stuck it in his mouth.

 His parents would flip if they saw him doing this, but his grandfather was more relaxed about these things.

 “Have you heard a word I was saying?” Gramps asked.

 Darryl nodded. He threw the knife; it landed point first in the front door of Gramps house and stuck there quivering. Gramps got up off his easy chair with loud popping of old joints. He walked over to the door and pulled out the knife. “So what did I say?”

 “Monsters disguised as people want to enslave humanity and eat their children,” Darryl answered.

 “Close enough. Where did you get this?” Gramps held up the knife.

 “The pantry,” he answered. He had been looking for snack food and had found it on the floor. Gramps flicked the blade with his finger making it ping.

 “Hmmph, thought I’d lost it. Came from Stonehenge forge, don’t make steel like this anymore. You want it?” he asked.

 Darryl nodded, face lighting up.

 “You can have it,” he held it out by blade so handle pointed at Darryl. “On one condition. You see one of these creatures, or if you even think you do, you get the hell away. Avoid dark places, stay in the sun and well lit areas until the creature is gone. Promise?”

 Darryl nodded. “Promise,” he said. An easy promise to keep since these things came from his Grandfathers imagination. The old man looked at him for what felt like a long time, and Darryl began to fear he’d changed his mind, but then his grandfather bent down and picked up the old leather sheath, slipped the knife into it and handed it to him.

 “Be careful with that thing, it’s sharp,” he said.

 “You said you first saw one when you were about my age?” Darryl asked.

 The old man’s face hardened up. His mouth turned down, he looked angry. “I told you before. You’re not ready for that story.”

 “But I‘m ten,” he protested, the old man’s reluctance made him curious.

 “I said no, and lay off my front door, I’ll set up some old boards for you to practice knife throwing. “ He stumped off, and came back with the boards.

 “You're too young for this, and I'm sorry for that. You want the whole story? Good, that's what you’re going to get.”