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# MONSTER HUNTING for BEGINNERS

IAN MARK

*Illustrated by Louis Ghibault*





## First Things First

Monster hunting isn't as easy as it looks.

I should know.

My name's Jack, and I'm a monster hunter.

I know what you're thinking. That kid can't be a monster hunter. Look at him. He couldn't fight a cold, never mind the sort of bloodthirsty creatures you'd expect to find in the pages of a book rather than in real life.

I get that a LOT.

I'm small for my age.

I wear glasses.

I'm clumsy.

I'm not built for trouble.

My hair is too long and is



always falling over my eyes at the wrong moment.



But it's true.  
I can prove it.  
Here is me  
doing battle  
with a Kraken.  
(The Kraken  
is the one on  
the left.)

This is me trying to hypnotise a three-headed bogeyman with an eyeball tied to a string of mouldy spaghetti. (Trust me, you don't want to know all the horrible details. I still have nightmares about it sometimes.)



And here I am  
having a wrestling  
match with . . . well,  
I'm not sure what  
that is. Some sort  
of shapeless blob  
with too many mouths.\*



Not all monsters have names. That's one thing I've learned since taking up the job.

I've also discovered that you should never say "good doggie" to a Hellhound when it's in a bad mood.

That's why I'm running very fast in this picture.

In fact, I was running so fast, I'd already run away before the picture could be taken.

(Sorry about that.)

*\* In case you're wondering, I lost. It's not easy holding on to a blob long enough to make it admit defeat.*



But I'm getting ahead of myself. Begin at the beginning, isn't that what everyone says? I've already broken that rule, but it's still not bad advice. Let's start again.



## *In The Beginning*

I wasn't always a monster hunter.

To begin with, I was just a baby.\* You can't fight monsters in a dirty nappy.

It's too messy.

Soon after that, I was sent to school. There I had to sit still for hours every day, learning my ABCs, together with all the other letters of the alphabet, because apparently you can't get far in life only knowing the first three.

I was even forced to do a thing called **Long Division**, which I've since found out is banned as a form of torture in at least seven countries.

*\* Most people are. To begin with.*

It didn't leave much free time for playing hide and seek with Hobgoblins.

Back then, I'd never actually seen a monster with my own eyes – or anyone else's eyes, for that matter. But I had good reasons to believe that they were real. The other children laughed at me when I tried to tell them that the world was as full of monsters as a cheese sandwich is full of cheese. I didn't care.

I was happy to sit by myself during break, doodling strange animals in the margins of my school book. Somehow I always knew that I was destined for **Bigger Things**. There had to be more to life than going to school and doing my homework and cleaning my room!

Let's just say I had a **Taste For Adventure**.<sup>\*</sup> The only problem was that nothing exciting ever happened to me.

There were two reasons for that.

The first reason was called Dad.

He wasn't bad, as Dads go. He didn't make

me stand on my head for three hours for my pocket money, or take me to the dentist as a treat on my birthday.

He just wasn't very adventurous, that's all.

The most daring thing Dad ever did was wear odd socks on Thursdays. He wouldn't even let me keep a pet snail, because he said they were too ferocious and might bite me. Dad worried about **EVERYTHING**.

That was because of the second reason.

She was called Mum.

It was Mum who'd first told to me **The Truth About Monsters**. When I was small<sup>\*</sup>, she was constantly telling me stories about the strange, wonderful, terrifying creatures that wandered the hidden places of the earth.

Especially dragons. I longed to see a dragon more than anything.

Well, almost anything.

What I MOST wanted to see was Mum

*\* I also had a taste for sausage rolls, but this isn't the time to get distracted by thoughts of food.*

*\* Smaller to be more precise.*



again, but I couldn't, because she'd died.

Here's my favourite photograph of us all on holiday when I was a baby.

(It was taken on a Thursday, as you can tell by Dad's socks.)

It made me sad to look at sometimes, but

happy too, because it helped me to remember when she'd been here, even if she wasn't now.

After she died, Dad had given up his job\* to look after me, and he was what experts in the field – or children, as they're better known – call a **Bit Of A Party Pooper**. That means he

was afraid of me doing anything in case I hurt myself . . . or worse. I get it! He'd lost Mum, and he didn't want to lose me too.

But it was frustrating. Sometimes I just wanted to **Go Wild** for a while, and you can't do that with a Dad fussing at your shoulder every minute saying, "Don't run too fast, Jack, you'll trip over your shoelaces" or "You mustn't sit there, Jack, you'll get piles."\*

What I didn't know is that my boring life doing boring things every boring minute of every boring day of the boring year was about to get very not boring indeed.

\* Whatever that was.

\* Piles are really nasty things you get on your bum. Grown-ups are convinced that sitting down anywhere damp and chilly for five seconds will make them sprout up faster than cress on a wet paper towel.