

IAN MARK is an author and monster hunter who spends his time wrestling krakens, hypnotising bogeymen with an eyeball on a string of spaghetti, and writing about his adventures to entertain young monster hunters all around the world. Ian lives in Northern Ireland with his family and lots of small, furry monsters or 'cats'.

LOUIS GHIBAULT is an illustrator and animator from Belgium. When he's not doing art you will find him collecting books and botanical prints, or studying astronomy, botany, history, zoology and, of course, MONSTEROLOGY.

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funny!'
Maz Evans

MONSTER HUNTING for BEGINNERS

ILLUSTRATED BY
LOUIS
GHIBAULT

IAN MARK

Once upon a time, an
ordinary boy called Jack
found an ogre in his back
garden trying to eat his aunt.

Now Jack is a monster hunter's
apprentice. And all he has are his wits,
his catapult and this book you're holding
in your hands.

Do you have what it takes to join
Jack, help him catch all the monsters
and save his dad?

How many evil, bloodthirsty
monsters can there really
be, after all*?

*LOADS.

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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**.^{*} 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^{*}, 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.



Knock, Knock

The day that everything changed began like any other. As usual, I was woken up by the sound of my shiny brass alarm clock going off. As usual, I groaned and clamped the pillow over my head in the hope of getting five minutes' more sleep.

Dad called me precisely thirty-three seconds later, as he usually did, to tell me that breakfast was ready, and I trudged downstairs drowsily in the usual way to eat it.

I set off for school shortly afterwards, only to be called back by Dad, who pointed out that I was still wearing my pyjamas.*

** That, I'm glad to say, wasn't usual at all.*

I quickly flung on the right clothes, then dashed the rest of the way to school, hoping that I wouldn't get into trouble for being late.

(I did.)

In the hours that followed, I was shouted at three times for staring out of the window, daydreaming about dragons, when I was meant to be learning why some places have volcanoes and some don't.*

I got into more trouble when Stanley Jenkins, who'd recently been elected Head Bully, dropped a worm down the back of my neck in the middle of a spelling test, making me jump to my feet with a scream.

The teacher demanded to know what was going on. Stanley Jenkins said that I'd begged him to do it to help cure my hiccups.

The teacher, being every bit as stupid as Stanley Jenkins, believed him.

The moment the bell rang to set me free, I grabbed my bag and ran home happily. It was

** I still don't know the reason. Like I said, I wasn't paying attention.*

the end of another week. I couldn't wait to sit down with Dad in front of the TV with our regular Friday night supper of fish and chips.

Problem No. 1: When I got home, there were no chips waiting on the table.

Problem No. 2: There was no fish either.

Problem No. 3: There was also no Dad.

Which, when I thought about it, probably explained the first two problems.

I called his name.

No answer.

I checked every room.

The house was emptier than Stanley Jenkins' brain.

That wasn't like Dad.

Not.

At.

All.

He was ALWAYS waiting for me when I got home, and he ALWAYS asked me the same question: "How was school today?"*

** Why do parents do that? It's school. It's not like anything exciting ever happens there.*

Trying not to worry, I kicked off my shoes, and settled down on the sofa to flick channels while I waited for him to return. I must have nodded off, because the next thing I remember it was nearly dark and there was a loud knocking at the door.

'Dad!' I said, jumping up and rubbing my eyes in confusion. "Where have you been?"

I opened the door to see **THIS** standing outside on the doorstep.





Who's there?

Scary, or what?

She said her name was Aunt Prudence.

Worse still, she said she was MY Aunt Prudence, and that she was moving in at once to look after me, whether I liked it or not.*

"I don't think I have an Aunt Prudence," I tried explaining politely, because I'd always been taught to **speak nicely to my elders** – even if they were glaring at me through their flying goggles as if I was something unpleasant that had been trodden into the carpet and wouldn't come out no matter how hard you scrubbed it. "Dad would have mentioned it. Are you sure you've come to the right house?"

** Just to be clear, I didn't.*

"Of course I am, you confounded pest," she said. "Your idiot of a father's decided to go off on a round-the-world voyage and he's asked me to look after you until he gets back."

"But . . ." I started to say, because that absolutely did not sound like the sort of thing Dad would do, and I knew him better than she did. I knew him better than anyone.

"No buts!" she shouted, because no one listens to you when you're small and wear glasses. "All that butting will turn you into a goat! Now shut up and get out of my way. Boys' voices make my ears bleed."

Then she shoved me out of the way and barged right in without even wiping her feet, treading on my toes in her fearsome black hobnail boots as she passed.*

She immediately made herself at home by demanding that I put all my stuff out of sight to make more room for her (really quite enormous) collection of hobnail boots.

**I'm sure she did it on purpose when she saw that I was only wearing socks.*

Soon it felt more like her home than mine,
and that didn't feel like a home at all.

Aunt Prudence was very strict. She insisted
that I eat all my meals with a knife and fork,
even if it was soup, or cheese and onion crisps.
She refused to let me watch cartoons on TV,
only long documentaries about History – and
if she'd known that those were my favourite
programmes, then she wouldn't have let me
watch them either.

I never saw her smile, and she once had to
lie down in a dark room for an hour when
she heard me laughing because it upset her so
much. Jokes brought her out in a rash.

She had a note from the doctor to prove it.

There was no way Dad would have gone
away and left me at the mercy of such a
dreadful person if he could help it, even if she
was my aunt.* She said she had proof it was
true, but she never produced it, no matter how
many times I asked.

** And I had Serious Doubts about that as well.*

Instead, Aunt Prudence spent her days
snooping round the house . . .

Opening cupboard doors . . .

Looking under beds . . .

Digging in the garden.

She was obviously looking for something,
and I was determined to find out what it was.

A week after Dad's disappearance, I finally
got a chance to do just that.

