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Sample translation: Jana Bauer: How to Frighten a Monster

Jana Bauer

HOW TO FRIGHTEN A MONSTER

Illustrated by Małgosia Zajac



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My name is Otto. Otto Locust. That's all you're going to learn about me.

The doorbell rang. It was Philipp. Philipp Rabbit. He came for tea.

He kept squirming. He had dark rings under his eyes.

»I couldn't sleep all night,« he explained. He began to tremble, and he spilt some tea. »A large monster is hiding under my bed,« he sighed.

»Nothing to it,« I smiled. »I know how to get rid of it.«

I waited for Philipp to finish spilling his tea, then I took my brown bag and off we went. Philipp lives three floors above me.

On the seventh floor lives Eddie Worm. Usually there are problems with him.

As we passed Eddie's door, the door opened, a leg was pushed out and tripped up Philipp.

On the eighth floor lives Mrs. Deirdre Thorn Hedgehog. She has strange habits. And she really does hate children.

As we passed the door of Mrs. Deirdre Thorn Hedgehog, the door opened. A head with curlers popped out and said: »I'm watching you!«

Philipp and I replied, »Good morning, Mrs. Thorn Hedgehog.«

(Later, as we went back, a large eye stared at us through a spyhole.)

On the ninth floor lives Phillip.

During her free afternoons, Philipp's mother likes to hypnotise cats. Philipp's father has gone to swim the length of the Amazon River. And there is a monster under Philipp's bed.

»Afternoon, Mrs. Rabbit.«

We all know there are three kinds of monsters: GROSS, TOOTHED and FURRY.

I was hoping that the monster under Philipp's bed was a GROSS one. They are fat, have only one eye and claws on their paws. The GROSS monsters are not very clever and they are mortally afraid of brass bands. When a gross monster is still very small, its mother keeps admonishing it by waving a claw at her: »If you won't obey, a brass band will come and blow you away!«



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I opened my bag, pulled out a small radio, pressed the third button, and already we could hear the sound of a loud march. I pushed the radio under the bed. Philipp and I waited impatiently. But...

... there was nothing for a long time. Then the radio went silent and all we could hear was the sound of munching and smacking. And HRRRK. And PFUUUT. A tassel rolled out from under the bed.

»It spat,« Philipp said, horrified. »It spat out a tassel!«

But it wasn't a tassel, it was my little radio. Chewed up!

»Don't worry,« I tried to calm my friend. »If it isn't a gross monster, it's probably a toothed one.«

TOOTHED monsters have sharp teeth, horny heads and slimy bodies. They are a nuisance and won't leave you alone – unless you have a raspberry cough syrup at hand. Toothed monsters simply can't stand it. They get sick even if they only see a commercial for it.

I took a large serving spoon and half a litre of raspberry cough syrup from my bag. I unscrewed the top and poured syrup in the spoon. If the monster under the bed was a toothed one, it should by now be pressing its dirty paws to its nostrils. It should be swooning from nausea. It should crawl from under the bed, streak to the bathroom and disappear through the toilet bowl God knows where.

But it didn't! All we could hear was CRUNCH and YUMMY! And when I tried to pull the spoon from under the bed I realised that I would never again be able to serve potatoes with it. The monster had swallowed the spoon together with the syrup!

»This must be a FURRY monster,« I said to Philipp.

Philipp swallowed. His hands were shaking.

FURRY monsters have an evil look, horrible breath and an awkward furry body. They are the most evil, the most wily, the most dangerous of all monsters.

I smiled at Philipp. »I know how to send it packing.«

I coughed and started to recite a horrible poem. Very loudly. A poem which makes every furry monster's hair bristle with terror.



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I know a girl called Mary
of whom you should be wary.
She locks you in a wardrobe
and orders you to *disrobe*,
she gives your hair a wash
your fur a painful brush,
before she ties your hair in knots
she perfumes all your spots.
So now your wiry hair, so hard,
is soft as so much lard.

Recently you dreamt about her,
in your nightmares, in your dreams.

Then I yelled: »WATCH OUT, Mary's among us!«

NOTHING. The monster didn't fly to the window, it didn't open it, it didn't get lost behind the horizon.

No fearful howling could be heard. No desperate shouting. Everything was silent and peaceful.

Something is wrong here, I thought. Terribly wrong. If there is no MOST HORRIBLE MONSTER under Philipp's bed, what then could be hiding there?

We were left with only one possibility. Mr. Rattle. He lives three floors above Philipp. He has travelled the world and quite a bit of the Universe. He has seen much and knows a lot.

Mr. Rattle listened to us, nodded, rubbed his nose and fiddled with his ear.

»This is BIGTAIL,« he said. »An exceptionally rare, impudent and evil creature. It has a long powerful tail with which he can knock you far into space. That's what happened to me when I was your age. For a long time I kept flying aimlessly among the planets. Then I said to myself: you will return and show this villain it isn't nice to knock little boys far into space. You will find a way and get rid of Mr. Ugly.«

»And did you?« Philipp asked with a trembling voice.



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»I did,« Mr. Rattle said and tittered. »You won't believe what drives him off.«

He climbed under the bed. He rumbled and clattered and cursed.

»I got it!« we finally heard him say. He emerged with a little box in his hand.

»This will drive him off. Just push it under the bed.«

»Thank you,« I said and grabbed the box. Philipp and I ran back to his room.

Carefully we pushed the box under the bed. For a while everything remained quiet. Then a horrible shriek could be heard echoing round the room. It was BIGTAIL. His scaly tentacle flew from under the bed and threw the box away.

»We killed it!« Philipp breathed.

I picked up the box and opened it. There was a mirror inside it. Evidently BIGTAIL had fainted as soon as he caught sight of himself.

»Quick, let's get him out of here before he wakes up,« I said to Philipp. We dragged the creature from under the bed, wrapped it in a blanket and carried it out. It wasn't half heavy!

As we passed Eddie Worm's door, he was just getting ready to trip up Philipp. We paused for a moment.

»Eddie,« I said to him, »if you trip up Philipp ever again I will put a monster under your bed.«

Eddie gave us an evil grin.

I unfolded the blanket a little and showed him the bigtailed creature. Eddie's grin contracted into a tiny dot in the middle of his face. I think he will never ever trip up Philipp again.

In the nearby wood we put BIGTAIL down on the bank of a stream. He might be thirsty when he wakes up.

We returned to my place, I made tea and we drank it in peace. This time Philipp didn't spill any.