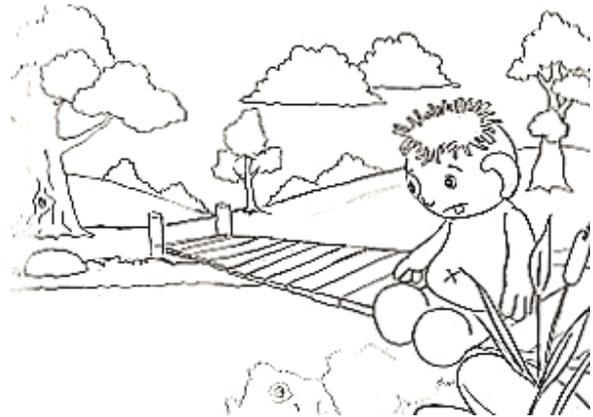


## The story of the kind Mo, who wanted to be a real monster

It was a Sunday evening and Mo was sitting under a bridge, dangling his little legs in the water and thinking. Mo was different from the others. Sadly, he looked at his reflection in the water. His skin was green all over and around his nose he had huge pink freckles. His hair looked wild and his right eye was larger than his left. And that was just as it should be because Mo was a monster. A monster that looked wild and dangerous. A monster that is so bad that everyone runs away screaming when they see it. And that was his problem because Mo was far too cute and he didn't have a hope of scaring anyone. Also, if he was honest with himself, he didn't enjoy scaring people anyway.



Mo didn't have any friends.

The other monsters in monster school made fun of him because he looked so nice and friendly.

Fat Fo, whose entire body was covered with warts, pointed at him and roared with laughter.

"Look at him," he cried, "he hasn't even got a single wart on him. Green skin, as smooth as a Monsterbaby's bottom! Beastly!"

Drought Dan, with his long sharp teeth, looked disdainfully down his nose at him and said:

"He hasn't even a single useful tooth in his mouth. Look, they're all perfectly straight and pearly white. It looks disgusting!"

And Crazy Vanda, who could scream so loudly and scarily, that even the other monsters were afraid of her, said:

"With that tinkling little voice like a bell you'd never win a screaming contest. Pah! They wouldn't even let you in the screaming contest."

Even the teachers in school pitied Mo.



"You must make more of an effort to get rid of that friendly smile," they'd say, or "Can't you try to be a little bit louder and wilder?"

Today had been a particularly hard day for him at school. Mo had been in the grimacing lesson and had to demonstrate what he had already learned.

He tried to make the most horrible grimace that had ever been seen in the monster world.

But when he rolled his mismatched eyes, curled his nose and twisted his mouth into a terrifying snarl, it was so funny that all the other monsters just howled with laughter. Fat Fo was clutching his stomach in agony from so much laughing and he almost fell off his chair. Drought Dan was shaking so much with laughter that he accidentally bumped his head on the edge of his desk and his sharp teeth sank into the wood and Crazy Vanda laughed and screamed so loud that all the other monsters stuck their fingers in their ears and ran for cover. Even the teacher smiled and shook his head and said: "Thank you Mo, that'll be enough of that for now, you go and sit down like a good monster."

But Mo did not sit down. He was so angry and enraged that he ran away. He wanted to get as far away from school as he could and he ran and he ran until he finally found himself close to the river and underneath the bridge where we first met him. He could barely catch his breath because he had run so fast and was so furious.

"I'll show them that I can be a real monster", he thought.

He just wanted to be as terrifying as everyone else.

"Maybe I could make a few warts out of plasticine", he thought. "Then Fat Fo wouldn't laugh at me anymore." But Mo

didn't have any plasticine and he didn't even know where he could buy some.

"Or maybe I could stop brushing my teeth and sharpen them to points, then Drought Dan might want to be my friend."

But even that wasn't such a great idea because Mo was proud of his beautiful teeth, not that he would never have admitted it to anyone.

"I'm just going to be the meanest and most dangerous monster in the world. All the people will be afraid of me, then the others in school will see that I am a really bad monster and just as good as them."

This seemed to him like a good idea and the best part about it was that he could put it into action straight away and start scaring people. The sun had almost set; it was the best time of the day to scare people.

So Mo decided to be mean and dangerous and terrify everyone he met.

The first human that Mo saw was a woman who was cleaning the sidewalk. She was using a broom to sweep all the garbage, dust and leaves into a small pile. "Wuaaah" roared Mo and jumped right into the middle of the pile and sent it flying all over the sidewalk. But the woman wasn't afraid, not really.

She just looked annoyed and sighed: "What are you doing? Now I'll have to start over again and I'm already late going home."





Poor Mo, he felt so discouraged but then he met a young couple pushing a stroller with their baby along the road. The child had just dropped his baby rattle and when the father tried to pick it up, Mo screamed: "Rooooaarr!" and kicked the rattle away with his foot so that it disappeared down a sewer grating. The child started to howl and the young parents looked at each other in despair. "Let's just turn round and go back home," the mother said. "There's no point in carrying on like this."

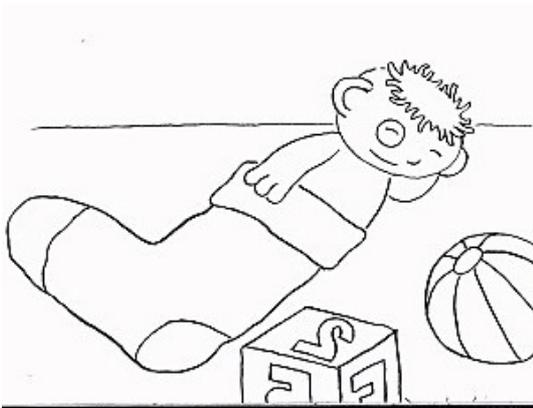
Then he saw an old man leaning on his walking-stick with his dachshund at his feet ready for a walk.

"Boo!" cried Mo, grimacing and kicking the walking stick out of his hand.

The old man was really shocked and then looked sadly at his stick which was lying on the road in front of him. Unfortunately he couldn't bend over to pick it up because his poor old back was hurting. Mo felt so ashamed of himself, he picked up the stick, handed it back to the old man and quickly disappeared around the corner. The man was confused, he couldn't quite work out what had just gone on and stood there scratching his head.



"Scaring people is really no fun at all," thought Mo and he sighed. "I'll never make it as a real monster."



When he realized this, it made him terribly sad and very tired, so he decided to look for somewhere to sleep. He didn't want to go home to the monster world but then luckily he spied an open window; he climbed through it and plopped softly to the floor on the other side. Looking quickly around he discovered that he had landed in a kid's room. Mo hastily crawled under the bed and he felt guilty again because a real monster would never hide under a bed.

Monsters should make frightening noises and have fun when others are afraid of them. Thoroughly disheartened, Mo crept into the farthest corner of the bed where he found a forgotten sock, which he used as a sleeping bag. He decided to take a nap, tomorrow morning was another day to try and be wild and dangerous again.

He had just fallen asleep when he awoke to find someone nudging him. "Hey," he heard a loud voice, "Hey you! What are you doing in my sock?" Mo blinked and saw a little monster girl standing there.

She had pointed ears and pink hair and looked rather angry.

"Who are you?" He asked, still half asleep.

"I'm Mia and I live here, but I asked first! Who are YOU? And what are you doing here? Don't you know that a real monster would never hide under a child's bed?"

"Ah," sighed Mo. "I'm Mo. And I'm not much of a monster I'm afraid. I am far too nice and I don't enjoy scaring people. I tried, honestly! But actually I'd much rather be friendly."

"Hmm," said the monster girl and looked at Mo thoughtfully and a bit more kindly. "How can you do something that you think is not right?" she said.

Mo shrugged. "I just wanted to be like everyone else," he said.

"Boring!" Mia said in a loud voice and Mo looked at her in astonishment.

"What?"

"Boring," repeated Mia "Why be like everyone else? Then everyone would be the same. And that would be really very boring. You should dare to be different. Besides, none of the other monsters are anywhere near perfect!"

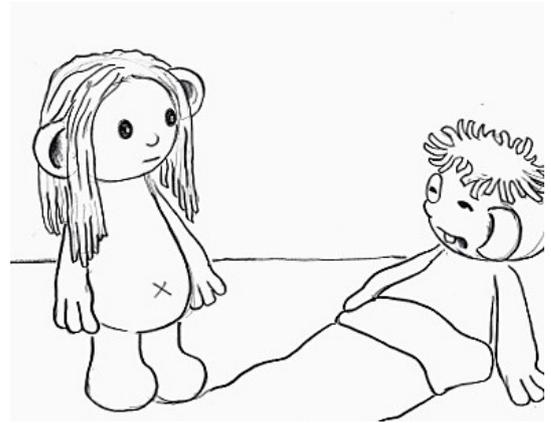
Mo started thinking about that. Fat Fo was large and thick and with his warts he really did look scary but his hands were far too fine and beautiful for a monster, and he had very cheerful voice.



Drought Dan was very proud of his terrible teeth but his eyes were gorgeous and if wasn't careful he didn't look scary and bad at all. And Crazy Vanda, with her ear-splitting voice, had beautifully soft long hair, which really didn't fit with the monster image.

"You're right" said Mo. "All the other monsters in the Monster school are not perfect either! But they all have at least one thing that they are good at. I don't have anything."

"I don't believe that," said Mia. "Everybody can do something well."



Look at me; I ran away from home, my family laughed at me when they realized that I love human children. I felt stupid and ashamed that I had let them down somehow, but I couldn't change the way I am. A leopard can't change his spots now, can he?" That explained why Mia was living underneath the bed. She told Mo that little Tom, who slept in this bed, sometimes cried at night because he had bad dreams. Then she would climb up into his bed and cuddle him for a while.

"That's what I like to do," she said. "And I'm good at it. I'm not much of a monster either. And you? What do you like to do?"

Mo thought. "Well, actually ....., " he said and hesitated for a moment, "I much prefer to help others than to scare them."

"Then do it," Mia said. "Just try!"

And so Mo did just that. The next morning he went back into the city. He met the young mother again, who was walking with her baby in the stroller. The child had a new baby rattle that he clutched in his hand. Mo scrambled unnoticed into the stroller and made sure that the child didn't lose the toy.

Whenever it threatened to slip out of his little hands, Mo pushed it gently back.



He stayed in the stroller until the mother reached home. "You have been a good baby today," she said to the child. "No shouting and throwing away your baby rattle." Mo was very pleased when he heard that, he hopped off the stroller and went happily on his way.

A little later he saw the old man and his dog again. The dachshund had just done a poo on the sidewalk and the old man scratched his head and looked around. It was too hard for him to bend down and clean the mess himself, he knew he would also have to ask somebody to help him.

Mo appeared out of nowhere and grabbed a sheet of newspaper that he found in the meadow. He cleaned it all up and then disappeared, like a wisp of smoke. The old man was baffled, but also very much relieved.

"Look at that," he murmured and smiled. "Maybe there are still miracles after all!"

Mo was delighted when he heard that and decided that from now on he would help the man whenever he could.



And how astonished was Mrs. Muller, the concierge when she came home that evening. In front of her door was a small pile of leaves, bits of paper, cigarette butts and all the other rubbish from the street. All she had to do was just sweep it up into a dustpan and put it in the trash.

Mo peeped out at her from his hiding place and felt all warm inside when he heard her cheerfully saying:

"Now I can get in early for once and spend some time with my daughter before she has to go to bed!"

Once it got dark Mo strolled slowly back to the house where he has spent the last night. He felt that it had been a good day. Mia was already sitting on the windowsill waiting anxiously for his news.

"And?" she asked when she saw him, "how was your day?"

"Great!" exclaimed Mo. "I've spent all day doing things to help others. And I feel really fantastic!"

"Better than the monster school?" asked Mia

"Much better," replied Mo.

"Better than scaring the people?"

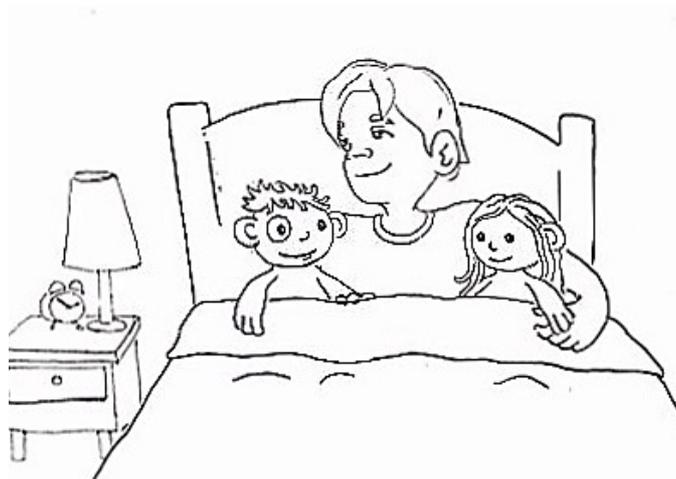
"Way better!"

Mia laughed and tapped Mo on the shoulder and said: "You're just a helpful monster, like I'm a cuddly monster. Now come with me, there's someone I want you to meet."

"What, now? Who is it?"

"Little Tom had a bad day today. He has been teased by the other kids at kindergarten because he said that monsters are real and that one lives under his bed. I think he needs two monster friends to help him."

So the three of them snuggled up together in Tom's bed and told each other stories until they fell asleep.



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