

“M”

He'd never literally run as though his life depended on it. Was he still being followed? If he could control his rasping breath for only a second he'd be able to tell -- But the exhausted noise tearing from his chest drowned out any sound of pursuit. The cold night air chilled the sweat on his back and neck to clammy droplets, froze the moisture beneath his watering eyes. He reeled into a nest of garbage cans, disturbing something vaguely human dozing there. He then dared to look back.

He saw a gently shadowed, empty city street. Empty. A gray, sooty cat, back arched and paralyzed with interest, stared at him from atop a collapsing fence before vanishing like shifting fog into the night.

He laughed a little, through the pain in his chest, a shaky, uncertain sound. What was he, an action hero now, tangling sweatily with evil forces? Heh, hey, where's the cameras? He trotted on again, not running now, but still not quite trusting the safety insinuated by the silence.

It had been so close. He had felt hot, whistling breath on his neck and during one hideous moment a groping touch on his shoulder.

That memory made him trot a little faster. In a moment he saw his building up ahead, saw a mangled child's tricycle put out with someone's trash. Saw down at the other end of the block, heavily skirting a street lamp, a hunched, bulky figure with searching, narrow eyes and a lumbering, brutal gait. And even at a block's distance, he could sense the moment when those eyes lit upon his own.

He outran the shriek that escaped his lips, left it hanging abandoned in the air as he sprinted crazily down the street in a mad effort to beat the creature – the thing – to his door. How had it outmaneuvered him? Gotten them into this position where they were running insanely *towards* one another, seeing who could get to the door first? To a bemused observer they would have looked like two long-lost friends on a cool spring night thrilled to see one another, rushing to embrace.

He made it just barely ahead of the beast. He marveled at the way his hand unshakingly worked the key into the outside lock, opened the heavy door and slammed it behind him. And looking up through the heavy glass he was eye to eye with the Monster. He saw the massive, shaggy hand rattling at the handle, the brutish face seeming incredulous – even hurt! – at having been locked out. It had been so close.

Too numbed even to feel triumph, he backed away from the door then turned to dart into the waiting elevator. And before the doors slid shut he heard a frantic series of short buzzings as the Monster pressed the rows of buttons by the mailboxes, tried crazily to elicit a response from some tenant eager for a little unexpected company this evening.

To his horror, as the elevator began moving ponderously upward, he heard a rejoining buzz to the Monster's probing. And following that, even through the grating sound of the elevator's ascent, he heard a weighty but swift thudding up the stairs as the beast attempted to outrace the elevator's progress.

Again, it was closer than his sanity could safely bear. He made it into his apartment just as the Monster burst muttering into the corridor, eyes riveted upon the terrorized figure collapsing exhausted from his sight.

The doorknob was tried tentatively, only once, before he heard the Monster retreat, this time via the elevator which still stood open.

And later that night looking down upon the quiet street, he saw the Monster standing there, gazing steadily up at his window.

* * *

He had made an appointment with a psychiatrist knowing he would cancel it. Arranging the appointment in the first place had been his way of convincing himself he wasn't insane. The crazy people, he knew, the *real* crazy people, were too firmly entrenched in their sickness to question it. But analyzing the possibility of sickness, that showed that deep down you weren't mentally ill. You just honestly had some shit going on.

And anyway, this was real. He sensed it, knew it, that the Monster was real. No one else ever seemed to see it, but that was only because the Monster was careful. The Monster didn't *want* to be seen.

And actually, he reminded himself, someone else *had* seen him. Just once and only briefly, but someone else had seen the Monster. Gloria. Gloria had seen the Monster dart out from an ally way to lunge after their cab as it was pulling away from the curb. He had already, at that point, proven his sanity by making and canceling the psychiatrist's appointment. But still, he recalled that long moment when he followed Gloria's gaze, waiting for her to gasp and point, afraid that she wouldn't – terrified that she wouldn't see a thing.

This whole Monster thing was an isolated outbreak of lunacy in his life. And yet it was not the first time that the abnormal had *wanted* to wrap its pale, damp fingers around his sensibilities. He had always sensed madness broiling just below the surface of his life, waiting for him, building up and preparing to lunge during some unexpected moment. Hadn't he always felt *pursued* by the wild and deranged? His relentlessly strict definition of reality, of what could and couldn't be, his cautious approach to life – had always managed to keep him at a distance from the aberration, the unknown. But he'd always been aware of its narrow, sardonic eyes peering at him from around corners, perceived its high-pitched giggling from behind half-closed doors. Lunacy *wanted* George Pearce. It had an appetite for him but he'd always managed not to become its meal.

And now. Now the Monster.

* * *

“He chased me last night.”

Gloria took the salt shaker from him before he could use it on his eggs. Gloria disapproved of heavy salt consumption. George did not protest because he was a little afraid of Gloria.

“He got right *into* the building. He was *in* there. It was close.”

She'd called him at seven, deciding she wanted breakfast and then a drive along the ocean.

"George, you know how I feel about this Monster business."

"He *chased* me! You should have been there! That Monster wanted to, I don't know, *mangle* me or something. I could see it in his eyes."

"George, I just can't believe you."

"It's the second time he's actually chased me."

Gloria shook her head and poured cream into her coffee. Sure, she could have cream in her coffee but he couldn't have salt on his eggs. He sank back into his seat miserably. The waiter brought them someone else's bagels and they both eyed them suspiciously before pointedly ignoring them.

"It's so like you to feel threatened by something you don't immediately understand."

"I immediately understood that that Monster wanted to mangle me."

"How do you know? Has it ever occurred to you that the Monster may simply want to communicate with you?"

"Oh, God."

Here was the thing: Gloria was on the Monster's side, whatever that meant. He had been so relieved when she'd seen him and he'd realized he wasn't the only one. He had expected some sympathy, some concern. Instead, Gloria, who routinely found things to disapprove of about George, looked upon the state of affairs as something George was mishandling.

"Look," she said, "how long has it been since the first time you saw the Monster?"

"I dunno. Two months."

"And during those two months the Monster has only appeared... aggressive twice."

“Aggressive is the word, all right.”

“Maybe so, but aggression doesn’t necessarily imply threat. He could have just decided to aggressively seek out your attention instead of passively waiting for you to approach him.”

“He was kind of snarling.”

“That could just be the way he talks.”

“God, I’m so sick of the Monster.”

“I can’t believe your hostility. Just because of the way the Monster looks you assume he’s evil or destructive.”

“He chased me!”

“He *followed* you.”

“Oh, god. Let’s go. Where’s our check?”

“Make sure he doesn’t charge us for those bagels.”

* * *

Lately George had considered that Lunacy’s pursuit of him had begun back when he was six or seven, back when he used to visit with Aunt Ada, the Hunchback.

Maybe once every couple of months, his parents would drop him and his sister, Margaret, off at that big, green, beaten looking house for the day while they went off on adult errands. To this day George doubted that his parents ever saw anything slightly odd beneath the pleasantly wrinkled, blue-haired faces of Aunt Elvie and her sister, Ada the Hunchback.

The lunacy was something perhaps reserved for George alone, a carefully engineered and subtly bizarre performance staged solely to plant suspicion and trepidation in his young mind and prepare him for a life of more of the same. It would start as soon as the older Pearces left. Aunt Elvie’s talc scented arms would drop from the children’s shoulders where they’d come to rest in a noose of counterfeit rapture as the hunch-backed Ada fled into the parlor. George and

Margaret would quiver uncertainly in the entryway while Elvie screeched through the closed and locked door at Ada, threatening to have the pastor come visit (Ada was apparently afraid of the pastor), reminding Ada of the time when as children, Elvie had saved her sister from a horde of boys who were planning to bury her up to her neck in a neighbor's vegetable garden and had gotten half way, and wailing that Ada could remain locked up in the parlor all she wanted any other time but *now*, and not to give her that business about not liking children. "They're *cherubs!*" Elvie would howl at the door.

Eventually Ada would emerge, hunched (of course) and tense, flinching at the sight of the two nervous young wrecks. And that would be when Elvie would put on a suddenly dazzling smile, gasp with astonishment at her watch and whirl out the door expressing regret at having made some ridiculous commitment and hoping loudly that she would be back home soon enough to spend some time with them. But of course she never did. For the remainder of the afternoon, they'd be as agonized by Aunt Ada's presence as she was by theirs. Perhaps it was the only way the old woman could think of to communicate with them, but all George remembered Aunt Ada entertaining them with were pickle sandwiches and ghost stories. She never asked them how school was or what games they liked to play or what their friends were like. She nervously prepared pickle sandwiches for them and when she became fully resigned to their presence, she would sink into a lumpy arm chair and tell them ghost stories.

The ghosts in Aunt Ada's ghost stories were not amorously shaped clouds of white or loud but innocuous phantoms dragging chains. These ghosts did hideous things to people – almost invariably children – with knives, ice picks, chain saws and acid thrown generously upon vulnerable young skin. And the ghosts got away with everything. George could not remember one victim in Aunt Ada's bloody stories who lived to seek revenge and justice.

George and Margaret never spoke to their parents about these dark afternoons. In fact they never spoke about it with one another. They mulled over the strangeness of it quietly and by themselves. The horrible finishing touch to these visits (and the reason, George was sure, that Margaret later developed bulimia) was when Elvie would sweep back in (shortly before the return of the older Pearces), glance at the remains of the pickle sandwiches and without fail giggle, "Ada, have you been feeding these children frog skins again?" Having spent hours

hearing gory horror stories, it was not beyond George's comprehension to imagine that he may actually have consumed frog skins. And because of the tense rapture with which Aunt Ada described the young victims of her tales, he did not dare refuse whatever she put before him.

* * *

Predictably, Gloria had no sympathy for George's long ago sufferings at the hands of Aunt Ada.

"It's typical of you, George, though it pains me to acknowledge it. You're blaming the weak way you deal with the Monster on a senile old woman who probably died twenty years ago."

Actually, George didn't recall ever hearing of Aunt Ada's passing. If she *was* still alive, who was she now serving frog skin sandwiches to?

"I wasn't trying to blame it on anyone," protested George. "I was just pointing out that I have some good reasons for avoiding the Monster. I've had disturbing experiences with anything in the slightest bit bizarre."

They were driving along the seacoast just out of the city. Slouched behind the wheel, George wasn't impressed with the scenery and Gloria herself wasn't even looking at it.

"Once at a party when I was about six, the kid whose birthday it was had a clown there doing tricks and stuff. The clown picked me for his disappearing trick, right? He puts me in this big box and closes up the front. He's gonna make me disappear, right? For awhile, all I can hear from outside is all the kids laughing at whatever the clown is doing. So I wait and wait in there, figuring he's in the middle of the trick, listening to all this laughter outside. Then it gets real quiet and I'm still waiting. I wait and wait. Then I start to panic! The minutes crawl by and now I'm not hearing anything at all from outside. I start kind of tapping on the inside of the box so someone will let me out and it's, like, pitch dark in there. Then I start banging on the sides! And you know what, Gloria?"

"What, George?"

George lit up one of his rare cigarettes and Gloria rolled down her window. “Well, then I thought, Christ! *I really disappeared!* I’m gone!

“So I was still banging away in there when finally the front panel slides open and there’s the clown grinning down at me! And he says, get this, ‘I made a mistake! I made everyone disappear but you!’ And the thing was, all the kids were gone!”

“Are you serious?”

“Well, listen. So I ran outa the room and there’s all the kids outside playing pin the tail on the donkey or something. Now what do you think of that?”

“Granted, it was a strange trick to play on a little kid...”

“I’m telling you! I’ve been *besieged* by the weird element in life! It wants me! It’s after me!”

Gloria shook her head. They spent the rest of the ride denying one another’s existence and feeling hostile toward the scenery which pretended to be impressive.

It was true, everything he’d tried to tell Gloria. Lunacy had always wanted him. For as long as he could remember it had been skulking around every corner, leering from the shadows and whispering sinister remarks, calling on the phone in the middle of the night and hanging up again after a breathy silence. And its persistence grew in pace with the stiffening rigidity of George’s sensibilities.

Lunacy, in its mindless pursuit of George Pearce, had taken many forms and pulled many a trick in its attempts to infiltrate, undermine and outrage his sense of seamliness. There’d been evil Aunt Ada, there’d been the evil clown. There’d been, he recalled, that evil monster ride at the park when he was ten. He had gone on it alone and his car had broken down halfway through. He’d waited there uneasily in the dark, surrounded by the silent mechanical ogres and demons who had ceased their automated howling and lurching at the same moment the car had stopped running. George waited for maybe five minutes, then the frozen glare of a Cyclops unnerved him to the point where he crawled out of the car and began stumbling down the curving tracks to seek the exit. Past paralyzed tableaux of midnight slaughters he went, past

savage jungle terrors and rampaging hellions of every type. And just as a gray patch of light far ahead materialized, everything came back to life. Hairy arms began swinging, teeth resumed gnashing. The tunnel became a horrifying cacophony of bellows, shrieks and wails through which George's piercing cry went unheard. He crouched motionless with terror under the lurching arms of a snake-man until a strange, at first unidentifiable, sound caught his attention. Looking behind him into the now garishly lit passageway, he saw a hideous thing: The red car he had abandoned was now flying down the tracks toward him at an intimidating speed. With a howl, George Pearce fled, emerging from the monster ride moments before the killer car.

"You're wary of anything that isn't clear cut and easily defined," Gloria told him toward the end of the morning. They were heading back into her neighborhood where he'd drop her off, and George prepared himself for the brief speech he'd learned to expect at the end of any time spent with her. He thought she tended to think of their dates as enactments or demonstrations and her role, ultimately, was to ponder the meaning of it all, reach a conclusion. His role, apparently, was to listen quietly.

"You're more than wary of it," Gloria pondered, digging through her bag for her keys. Her voice had that meditative, mildly stimulated tone of an impartial observer summing up their feelings about a presentation they'd sat through. "You're *threatened* by it – by anything that isn't exactly as it seems."

She glanced at him. "I don't like telling you this, George, but you border upon being extremely *dull*."

George knew he was dull. It had never bothered him. He did not think he was put on earth to entertain and amuse other people and so his dullness he considered merely an unalarming facet of his personality. But beyond this, he resented Gloria's implication that his embrace of the Monster would make him a more interesting (and hence better) person. He was beginning to really hate the Monster.

* * *

It was on his way to work one morning that he next saw the Monster. He saw a figure in a phone booth; this ordinarily would not have caught his attention except that the figure was so

very *big* and so very obviously not actually using the phone. When George looked more closely he saw that it was indeed the Monster, holding the phone at an awkward angle and watching him closely. The speculative way the Monster was looking at him reminded him of the way Gloria did when she felt obliged to summarize her thoughts about him at the end of a date.

For the rest of that day and for days afterwards George found himself constantly with his gaze shifting, eyes suspicious, looking for signs that the Monster was around and watching him. Sometimes the Monster *was* there, sometimes not. At night George was never sure whether or not the Monster was down on the street below, staring quietly up at his blank window.

* * *

A rich red, exquisitely sleek fox paced back and forth before George, his pointed muzzle never wandering from George's face, the paws padding restless and urgent behind the meshed wire. The morbid came to pause before the glass enclosures of the great snakes; the frivolous giggled at the parrots; the secretly hungry, proud ones were drawn to the lions. But why, thought the fox, would anyone stare at a fox? The fox was not used to being scrutinized, was unsure of this sudden ability to fascinate. The fox had not realized until now that he, more than the others, had been bred for solitude. He had been, up until now, lucky to be so overlooked.

George Pearce did not perceive the dilemma his blank, steady gaze had aroused in the fox. He saw only a plush red blur pacing before him and his eyes, as though on an invisible leash, mimicked its movements. His ears were trained in a similar way upon Gloria's voice; bored but obediently attentive, waiting mainly for any sign that he was expected to respond in some way.

“What if... What if, say, the first extraterrestrial being came to earth, with all kinds of plans and ideas to make our world a better place. And the first person it happened to approach was someone like you, who would turn his back, pretend he didn't see because he didn't understand. The being would probably leave again, thinking he wasn't wanted, that no one was interested.”

“He'd go to someone else,” said George, the back and forth motion of his eyes quickening with the increasingly agitated movements of the fox.

“No it wouldn’t!” cried Gloria, somehow triumphantly, as though she were making her Ultimate Point. “He’d assume, since he was an alien and didn’t know any different, that you were representative of all the population of this planet. How could he be expected to assume otherwise?”

“They’d plan better than that,” asserted George. “They’d know exactly where to go. They’d go to Washington or Moscow or Tokyo. They’d watch us very closely before making a move.”

“Oh, God!” Gloria was exasperated. “You don’t even know what I’m talking about! You deliberately refuse to see my point.”

George kept his stare fixedly upon the pacing fox. “You think the Monster’s come here with a plan to save the earth,” he suggested.

“Come *on!*” she almost shrieked. “You know what I mean! That was just an example! I’m trying to say that you need to try and see things from the Monster’s perspective!”

“The Monster is Lunacy,” said George. “The Monster is creaking steps in the night, bizarre coincidences, *deja-vu*, old ladies telling ghost stories and sadistic party clowns. The Monster is an empty car chasing me through a funhouse tunnel. And I don’t want anything to do with him.”

Gloria was on her elegantly high-heeled feet glaring at him. “You’re admitting it!” she shrieked, while the fox paused in confusion. “You’re admitting that everything I’ve told you about yourself is true!”

“So what?” demanded George. He had a vision of Gloria storming out of the zoo and his life and an even nicer vision of his relief should she do so.

“You... You’re admitting that you’re close-minded and unaccepting and unadventurous. You’re...” She broke off for a second to calm her voice. “Basically you’re admitting that you’re *unworthy* of the Monster!”

The fox fled into his little house.

“Why couldn’t the Monster have come to *me*?” demanded Gloria. “I would have understood!”

George finally looked at her, a gleam of insight sparking in his eye. “You’re jealous of the Monster,” he stated.

“At least I would give the Monster a chance!” she said, glaring. She would have gone on, but for once George halted her.

“Look,” he said. “I don’t *care* about the Monster. Do you understand? I don’t know where he came from or what he is, and I don’t *care*! I’ve seen the Monster a lot more than you have and I think he’s just as screwed up as anyone else, even if he has what you think of as an advantage because of being a Monster!”

He’d seen the Monster pensive. He’d seen him curious. He’d seen him downright menacing. He’d seen him caught in some sort of Monster conflict, and there was no way he was dragging George Pearce into it.

“I don’t know what his hang-up is,” said George, “and I don’t care!”

As Gloria was about to retort they both heard a leafy rustling from the shrubbery behind their bench.

“Wha...” gasped Gloria. George, whose normal reflex in such a case would have been to run, turned abruptly and pulled back the stiff green foliage.

“Oh!”

The Monster’s face stared back at them, a surprised, crumpled look in its eyes. Before they could react, it fled.

“I hope you’re satisfied!” cried Gloria. “I hope you’re happy! You’ve hurt his feelings!”

As they left the zoo the fox hesitantly poked his creamy white muzzle from his house.

* * *

George did not see the Monster *or* Gloria for a few days. The first one to make contact was Gloria and that was over the phone.

“I can’t see you anymore, George. I’m firm about that. It’s over. I just hope your rigid, intolerant attitude hasn’t done irreparable damage to the Monster.”

“God save the Monster,” growled George.

* * *

It was that night that he sat in his apartment, inattentive to the gibberish of the t.v., watching a note being slipped carefully under his door. He stared at the white rectangle intruding upon the quiet beige of his rug, seeming to glare up at him. He slowly stood up, retrieved it, read it.

Meet me now at Tony’s. Will explain all. M

George stared a long time at the scrawled ‘M’ signing the letter. He knew the ‘M’ did not stand for Martha. It did not stand for Margery, Mark or his sister Margaret. It did not stand for Millions of things.

The ‘M’ stood for Menace, Mayhem and Malevolence.

The ‘M’ stood for Monster.

He crumpled the letter and tossed it on the scuffed coffee table. He began pacing much as the agitated fox at the zoo had done.

The Monster had harassed him, literally harassed him for over two months. He’d disrupted his carefully barricaded sensibilities. He’d threatened him, or at least made him feel threatened. He’d managed to finish off a relationship with a woman who, if not a point of security in his life, had at least been a diversion.

And now the Monster, now ‘M’, requested his presence at Tony’s, the bar two corners down the block.

Had the Monster manipulated him to this end? Had the Monster cowed him to the point where, quaking and meek, he would obey this brief, curt summons?

“...*will explain all.*”

It was out of curiosity and nothing more that George got his jacket and headed to Tony’s.

* * *

The glowing yellow sign assaulted his attention the moment he stepped onto the sidewalk. He stood there a few moments looking far down the gray street at the hazed black on amber that announced ‘Tony’s.’

He began walking towards it. Because, after all, what could the Monster do to him in front of a bar full of people. Because, after all, in a way he had the upper hand – the Monster had requested this meeting and that gave George the choice of either obliging or shunning him.

George dwelled on this thought. The Monster, at least for these few minutes, was at the mercy of *his* whim. He could show up or not. The Monster was probably waiting at this very moment, uncertain, wondering what *George* would decide to do.

It was the first time since the appearance of the Monster that George had in any way been able to call the shots.

Up until now, he thought, watching the dull yellow sign glow increasingly brighter through the fog, up till now he’d been either frightened or uneasy, either threatened or curious, depending upon the mood of the Monster.

Then he was standing in the dusky entryway of the bar, standing with the bright fog behind him, staring across the shadowy, cavernous room, listening to the sound of glasses softly clinking and chairs scraping across the floor.

The Monster was there. He had a small table against the wall. He was dressed in a long raincoat with a hat pulled in a sharp angle across his face. He was staring at George, hesitant,

unsure; seeing, George knew, only a silhouette delineated against the softly glaring mist and not knowing... not knowing but thinking it might be George...

George lounged there for two long moments, relishing the Monster's uncertainty. Then he turned and left.

* * *

He didn't head directly home. He started off in the opposite direction, planning to go a few blocks that way then turn down a few more and eventually circle back to his apartment. He was exhilarated. He wanted to walk, to *move*.

That Monster. He'd shown him, he guessed. Whatever it was the Monster wanted, George had shown him you don't just go around scaring someone then thinking you can snap your fingers and have them come running.

He walked past a drugstore just closing, a tattered gray thing asking for spare change, an all night Laundromat.

It would show him, that was for sure. So maybe he didn't understand the Monster. So maybe the Monster just wanted to talk. That didn't mean he could...

George abruptly stepped out of the path of two elderly drunks arguing, then continued on.

If Gloria were here, of course, she'd say, 'Oh, the Monster just wants to *communicate*, he doesn't understand you because you're *different* from him, just like you don't understand him because he's different...'

In his mind he mimicked a high-pitched, assertive voice.

Anyway, he turned a corner, if the Monster really wanted to talk to someone, he could go out and find someone more receptive, someone who'd *appreciate* him.

George Pearce sat down heavily on the steps of a brownstone, pulled a wrinkled cigarette from his shirt pocket, wishing he'd gone straight home after all.

He was just the wrong type of person for the Monster to have approached, that was all. There were all kinds of nuts around who'd be willing to understand, who'd *welcome* a Monster into their lives. Gloria. God. She would have called him a press conference, whatever he wanted. Instead he picks George Pearce who just doesn't want anything wild and wonderful, bizarre and beautiful in his life.

George tossed the cigarette to the sidewalk unsmoked. He watched it sputter and sizzle out to a cold black amber as it rolled on the fog dampened pavement.

Oh, shit, thought George, suddenly staring helplessly up at the dull black sky. Had he been cruel to that damn Monster, rejecting his little overture? Was Gloria right about him? Close-minded, rejecting all that was not immediately defined?

He put himself in the Monster's place. He didn't know where he was from – some swamp, let's say – he just happens to wander into the city and decides to make contact with one of these strange alien creatures he sees walking around. And who does he first set eyes upon?

George groaned. He recalled standing in the doorway of Tony's, cloaked cleverly in fog. He remembered seeing the Monster at the corner table upon which sat two drinks, one for the Monster, one for a friend he'd asked to stop by.

Suddenly George was filled with self-disgust, penetrating remorse. The damn Monster had ordered him a drink, had been nervous about whether or not he'd show up...

George Pearce leaped from his sitting position, began running down the block, the dampness from the fog saturated steps clinging to his jeans.

The Monster would explain everything – if he was still there. He'd said that in his note, that he'd explain everything.

He darted around a corner, mouth open, breath rasping. Two girls walking in the opposite direction giggled, glancing back at him as he passed.

The Monster would be there. Monsters weren't... weren't offended by little things like rejection or rebuff. Even if he was offended, he probably hadn't left Tony's yet and George could explain things to him.

He'd explain things. He envisioned he and the Monster (laughing now) exchanging amusing little misconceptions each had had about the other. They'd probably laugh a lot, thinking how George had been so afraid of him.

George rounded another corner and saw again the yellow light through the mist saying 'Tony's!' He saw a heavy, lumbering figure come out of the bar and start slowly away in the other direction. It was the Monster.

As he watched, the Monster shed the raincoat, the hat, became a Monster again, and began disappearing into the fog.

"Wait!" called George, trying to run faster. He yelled. "Wait!"

He saw the Monster pause, look uncertainly back over his shoulder, seeing George.

"Wait!" cried George.

The Monster ran.