Helping your children choose books they will love

I reading

Lovereading4kids.co.uk is a book website created for parents and children to make choosing books easy and fun

Opening extract from

Here be Monsters

Written by

Alan Snow

Published by

Oxford University Press

All Text is Copyright © of the Author and/or Illustrator

Please print off and read at your leisure.

Lovereading4kids.co.uk

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Great Clarendon Street, Oxford OX2 6DP
Oxford University Press is a department of the University of Oxford.
It furthers the University's objective of excellence in research, scholarship,
and education by publishing worldwide in

Oxford New York

Auckland Cape Town Dar es Salaam Hong Kong Karachi
Kuala Lumpur Madrid Melbourne Mexico City Nairobi
New Delhi Shanghai Taipei Toronto

With offices in

Argentina Austria Brazil Chile Czech Republic France Greece
Guatemala Hungary Italy Japan Poland Portugal Singapore
South Korea Switzerland Thailand Turkey Ukraine Vietnam

Oxford is a registered trade mark of Oxford University Press
in the UK and in certain other countries

Text © Alan Snow 2005
Inside illustrations © Alan Snow
The moral rights of the author and illustrator have been asserted

Database right Oxford University Press (maker)

First published 2005
First published in this edition 2014

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced,
stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means,
without the prior permission in writing of Oxford University Press,
or as expressly permitted by law, or under terms agreed with the appropriate
reprographics rights organization. Enquiries concerning reproduction
outside the scope of the above should be sent to the Rights Department,
Oxford University Press, at the address above

You must not circulate this book in any other binding or cover
and you must impose this same condition on any acquirer

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

Data available

ISBN: 978-0-19-2739308

1 3 5 7 9 10 8 6 4 2

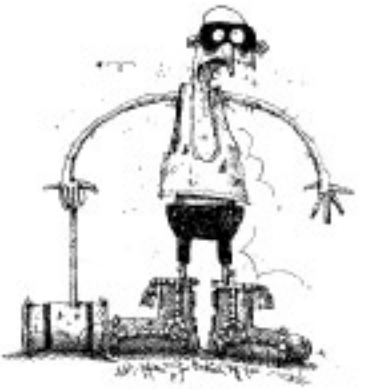
Printed in Great Britain
Paper used in the production of this book is a natural,
recyclable product made from wood grown in sustainable forests
The manufacturing process conforms to the environmental
regulations of the country of origin


Here Be Monsters

Introducing



Willbury Nibble



Herbert



Marjorie



Arthur



Fish



Rabbit Woman



Rabbit



Snatcher

the Characters



Captain



The Members



Cheese



Grandfather



Framley



Trotting Badger



Crow



Cabbagehead



Chapter 1

Coming Up!

It was a late Sunday evening and Ratbridge stood silver grey and silent in the moonlight. Early evening rain had washed away the cloud of smoke that normally hung over the town, and now long shadows from the factory chimneys fell across oily puddles in the empty streets. The town was at rest.

In the lane that ran behind Fore Street a heavy iron drain cover set amongst the cobbles moved. Something was pushing it up from below.

One side of the cover lifted a few inches, and from beneath it, a pair of eyes scanned the lane. The drain cover lifted further, then slid sideways. A boy's head wearing a woven helmet with nine or ten antennae rose



through the hole and glanced around. The boy shut his eyes, and he listened. For a moment all was quiet, then a distant dog bark echoed off the walls. Silence returned. The boy opened his eyes, reached out of the hole, and pulled himself up and out into the lane. He was dressed very strangely, in a large vest knitted from soft rope, which reached the ground, and under that a short one-piece suit made from old sugar sacks. His feet were wrapped in layers of rough cloth, tied with string.

Fixed about his body by wide leather straps was a strange contraption. On his front was a wooden box with a winding handle on one side, and two brass buttons and a knob on the front. A flexible metal tube connected the box to a pair of folded wings, made from leather, wood, and brass, on his back.

The boy slid the drain cover back into place, reached inside his under-suit and pulled out a toy figure dressed just like him. He held the doll out and spoke.

'Grandfather, I am up top. I think I'll have to go gardening tonight. It's a Sunday, and everything is shut. The bins behind the inn will be empty.'



There was a crackle of static, and a thin voice came from the doll. 'Well, you be careful, Arthur! And remember, only take from the bigger gardens . . . and only then if they have plenty! There are a lot of people that can only survive by growing their own food.'

Arthur smiled. He had heard this many times before. 'Don't worry, Grandfather, I haven't forgotten! I'll see you as soon as I'm done.'

Arthur replaced the doll inside his suit, then started to wind the handle on the box on his front. It made a soft whirring noise. For nearly two minutes he wound, pausing occasionally when his hand started aching. Then a bell pinged from somewhere inside the box and he stopped. Arthur scanned the skyline, crouched, and then pressed one of the buttons. The wings on his back unfolded. He pressed the other button while jumping as high as he could. Silently the wings caught the air as he leapt. At the bottom of their stroke they folded, rose, and then beat down again. His wings were holding him in the air, a few feet above the ground. Arthur's hand reached for the knob and he turned it just a little. As he did so he tilted himself forward. He started to move. Arthur smiled . . . he was flying.

He moved slowly down the lane, keeping below the top of its walls. When he reached the end, he adjusted the knob again, and rose up to a gap between the twin roofs of the Glue Factory. Arthur knew routes that were safe from the eyes of the townsfolk. When it was dark or there was thick smog, things were easy. But tonight was clear and the moon full. He'd been spotted twice before on nights like these, by children, from their bedroom windows. He'd got away with it so far, as nobody had believed them when they said they had seen a fairy or flying boy, but tonight he would not take any chances.



Arthur reached the end of the gap between the roofs. He dipped a little and flew across a large stable yard. A horse started and whinnied as he flew over. He adjusted his wing speed and increased his height. The horse made him feel uneasy. At the far side of the yard he rose again over a huge spiked gate. He crossed a deserted alley, then moved down a narrow street flanked with the windowless backs of houses. He came to another high wall. Carefully he adjusted the knob, and rose very gently to the point where he could just see the ground beyond the wall. It was a large vegetable garden, bathed in paths of pale light, cast from the windows of the house. Arthur saw one of the windows was open. From it he could hear raised voices and the clatter of dominoes.

That should keep them busy! he thought, scanning the garden again. Against the wall furthest from the house was a large glass lean-to.

He checked the house again, then rose over the wall and headed for the greenhouse, keeping above the beams of light from the windows. He came to rest in front of the greenhouse door, turning off and folding his wings.

He opened the door, and a soft rush of warm perfumed air brushed his face. It was a mixture of smells—some familiar, some not.

Dark leafy forms filled the greenhouse, suspended from the roof, others climbing almost invisible strings. As Arthur entered he recognized tomato plants, cucumbers, and grapes hanging from above.

He made his way to a tree against the far wall, a tree with branches only at its top. Dangling from a stem below the branches was a large bunch of bananas.

Arthur could hardly contain his delight. He tore a banana from the bunch, then peeled and ate it ravenously. When he had finished, he turned and checked the house. Nothing had changed. He reached inside his under-suit and took out a string bag, then pulled eagerly at the banana bunch. It was not as easy to pick the full bunch as it had been to pull off a single banana, and Arthur found he had to put his full weight on the bunch. Still it did not come down. In desperation, Arthur lifted his feet from the ground and swung his legs. All of a sudden there was a crack and the whole bunch, along with Arthur, fell to the ground. The tree trunk sprang back up and struck the glass roof with a loud smash.

'Oi! There is something in the greenhouse!' came a shout from the house.

Arthur scrambled to his feet, grabbed the string bag and looked out through the glass. No one was in the garden yet. He rushed to collect up as many of the bananas as possible, shoving them into the bag. Then he heard

a door bang and the sound of footsteps. He ran out of the greenhouse into the garden.

Clambering towards him over the rows of vegetables was a very large lady with a very long stick. Arthur dashed over to one of the garden walls, stabbed at the buttons on the front of his box, and jumped. His wings snapped open and started to beat, but not strongly enough to lift him. He landed back on the ground. Arthur groaned—the bananas gave him extra weight!



But he was not ready to put them down and fly away empty-handed—they were too precious. Still clutching the string bag in one hand, he grabbed for the knob on the front of the box with the other, and twisted it hard. The wings immediately doubled their beating and became a blur. Just as the woman reached the spot where Arthur stood, he shot almost vertically upwards. Furious, she swung her stick above her head and, before he could get out of range, landed a hard blow on his wings, sending him spinning.

'You little varmint! Give me back my bananas!' the woman cried.

Arthur grasped at the top of the wall to steady himself, adjusted the wings quickly, and made off over the wall.

Arthur felt sick to the pit of his stomach. Coming up at night to collect food was always risky, and this was the

closest he'd ever been to being caught. He needed somewhere quiet to rest and recover.

I wish we could live above ground like everybody else! he thought.

Now he flew across the town by the safest route he knew—flying between roofs, up the darkest alleys, and across deserted yards—till finally he reached the abandoned Cheese Hall. He knew he would be alone here.

The Cheese Hall had been the grandest of all the buildings in the town and was only overshadowed by a few of the factory chimneys. In former times, it had been the home of the Ratbridge Cheese Guild. But now the industry was dead, and the Guild and all its members ruined. The Hall was now boarded up and deserted. Its gilded statues that once shone out across the town were blackened by the very soot that had poisoned the cheese.

Arthur landed on the bridge of the roof, and was settling himself amongst the statues when he heard a mournful bleat. He listened carefully, intrigued, but heard no more, so he stowed the bananas behind one of the statues, climbed out from his hiding place, and flew up to the plinth on the top of the roof that supported the weathervane and lightning conductor.

A complete panorama of the town and the surrounding countryside, broken only by the chimneystacks of the factories, was laid out before him. In the far distance he could just make out some sort of procession in the moonlight making for the woods. It looked as though something was being chased by a group of horses.