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Opening extract from

Gormy Ruckles: Monster Boy

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The view from the top of the very tall tree

It was a crisp Maytober morning when Gormy Ruckles awoke with thoughts of monstering on his mind. After brushing his fang and combing his fur, Gormy scampered downstairs, into the kitchen, then out of the back door into the garden. This all took rather a long time, as the house was

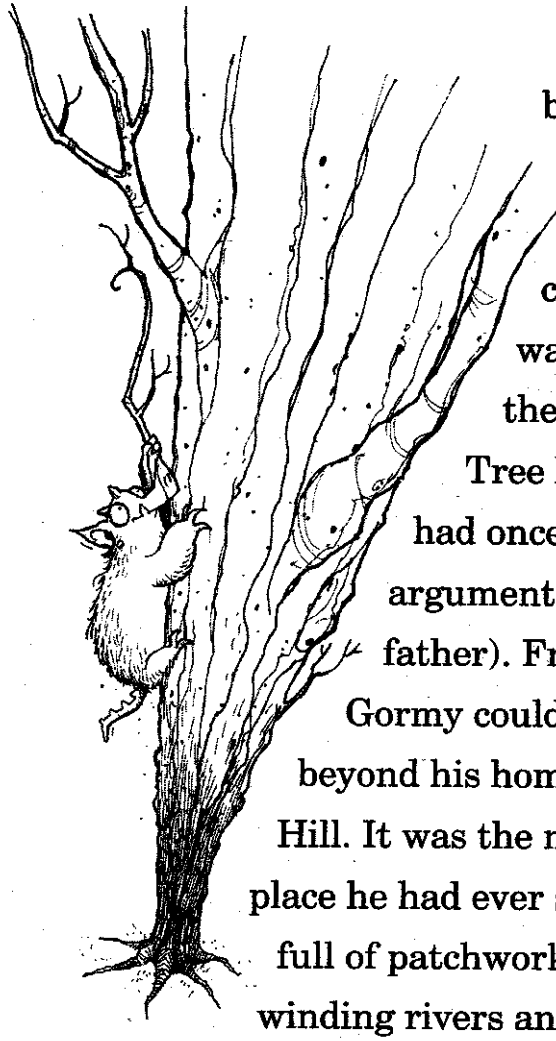


monstrously big and Gormy was very small. He was only one-eighth-and-a-seventh old, which was still young for a monster. However, as anyone with a passing knowledge of monsters can tell you, it is incredibly difficult to translate monster years into human years. It has something to do with sneezing and is actually quite disgusting.

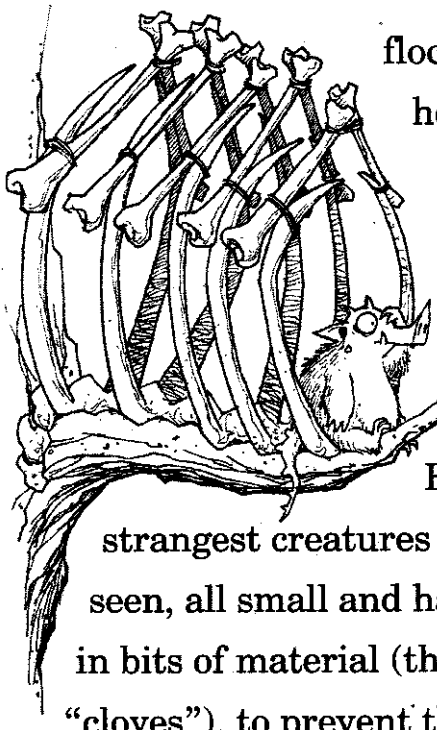
Gormy ran to the end of the surprisingly charming garden, where stood the Very Tall Tree. Even compared to a full-sized monster, the Very Tall Tree was *very* tall. To Gormy it seemed *enormous*. He dug his claws into the trunk and began climbing, up and up until the tree grew thick with bright-green leaves, then up and up (and up and up and up!) until he reached the top.

There, perched in the tree's highest





branches, was Gormy's treehouse (so-called because it was built from the bones of a Tree Monster that had once had an argument with Gormy's father). From here Gormy could see the land beyond his home on Peatree Hill. It was the most incredible place he had ever seen, chock-full of patchwork fields, long, winding rivers and huge, distant mountains. The treehouse was by far Gormy's favourite place. He could happily spend hours there, trying to catch sight of a



flock of sheep or a herd of cows. If he was very lucky he might even see the odd "hoomum". Hoomums were the strangest creatures Gormy had ever seen, all small and hairless and covered in bits of material (they called them "cloves"), to prevent them looking so tasty to hungry monsters!

Gormy had never once gone beyond the thick ring of trees that surrounded the house and made the top of the hill look, from the outside, just like a rather unwelcoming forest. He couldn't wait to explore the land beyond the hill! You see, Gormy Ruckles was



absolutely and completely *positive* that he was going to be the most monstrous monster that had ever monstered in the long and glorious history of monstering. More monstrous even than his father, Grumbor, who was easily as big as a very big elephant and had so many claws, fangs and horns that by the time you had counted them all, he would have eaten you. Grumbor was one of the best, most terrifying monsters in the land, and was quite well known. After all, he went out monstering almost every week and had never once been slain.

"One day," Grumbor would tell Gormy, "you will roam the forests and the glens, roaring and growling and stamping on things. It's like riding a bike – once you learn, you never forget how to be monstrous. But for now, you must stay here



on the hill, where it's safe. There'll be plenty of time for scaring and eating hoomums when you're older."

It seemed to Gormy that almost everything fun had to wait until he was older.

Maybe I'll just stay up here in the treehouse for ever, he thought. *At least then I can* see *the land beyond the hill.*

He might have, too, if not for hearing his mother's familiar cry:

"Breakfast!"

