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opening extract from

Oliver Moon and the Monster Mystery

written by

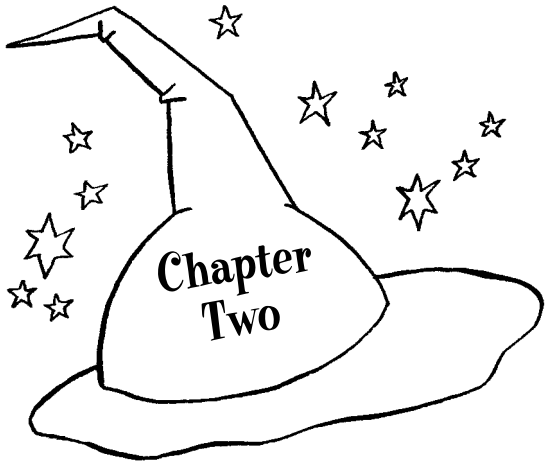
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Oliver could hardly move, he was so stunned. Had he imagined that? Had Mrs. MacLizard really just said what he thought she'd said?

His mum was nudging him. "Oliver! That's your ticket. You've won!"

It was real! Suddenly Oliver's voice came back to him and he shouted out,

"Yes! Here!" and waved his ticket in the air.

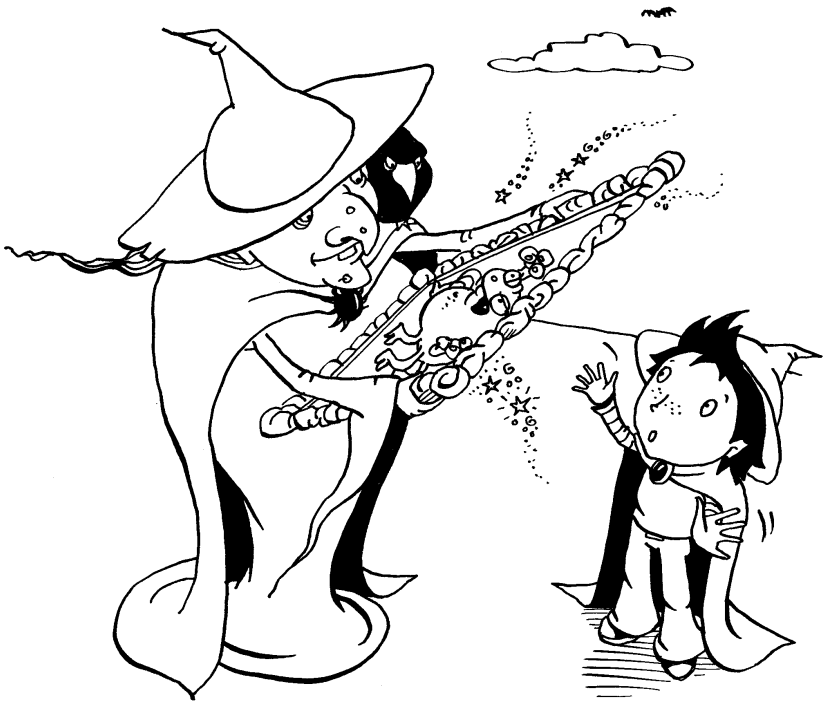
Mrs. MacLizard smiled down at him. "Oliver Moon, you've won a lovely prize. Do come up onstage to receive it."

Oliver had never moved so fast in his whole life. *I knew it was my lucky day,* he thought to himself in a daze, as he rushed up the steps to the stage. *I just knew it!*

"Well done, Oliver," Mrs. MacLizard said. She was holding a large painting of the most hideous green monster Oliver had ever seen, with three eyes, six legs, two gigantic hands and a body that looked as if it were made of wibbly jelly.

Ugh, Oliver thought, grimacing at the monster. Then he smiled up at his head teacher, waiting for her to give him his

prize. Oh yes. He could hardly wait to hold those tickets!



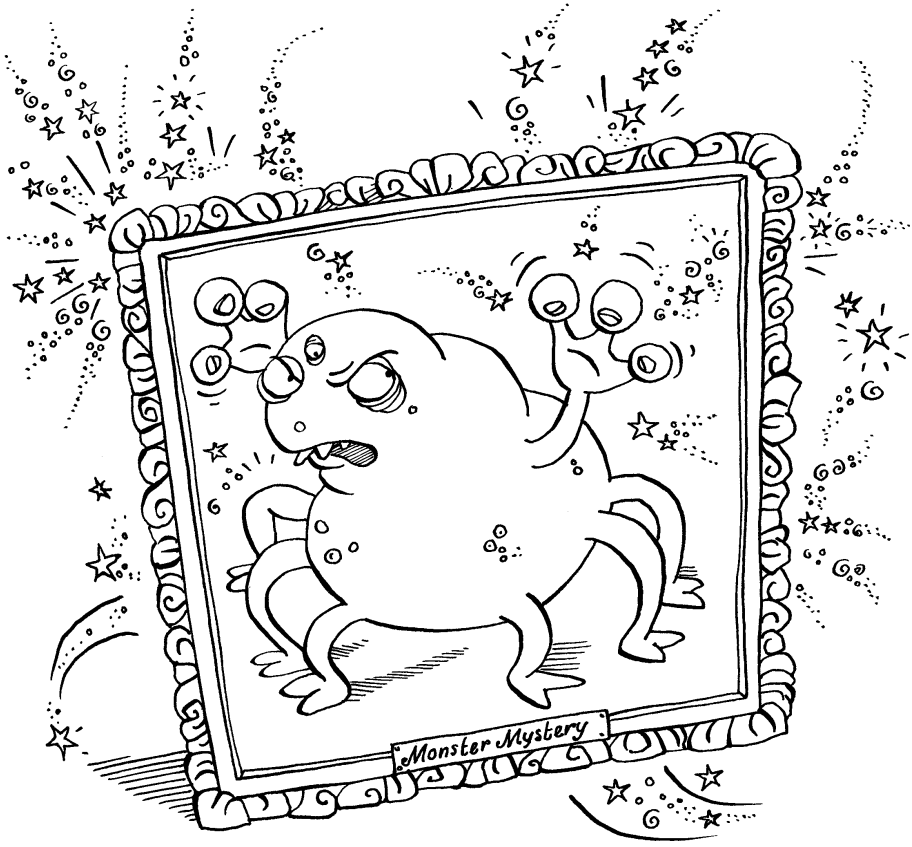
Mrs. MacLizard didn't give him any tickets though. She thrust the painting into his arms instead. "There," she said breezily. "Third prize. Something for your bedroom wall, perhaps? Jolly good."

Oliver didn't move. Oh no! *This* was what he'd won?

"Ahh, look, everyone, he's overcome with happiness." Mrs. MacLizard smiled. "We'd like to thank the High Witch Arabella for donating such a…um…such a *unique* painting. A splendid prize!" She picked up the pointy hat and delved into it once more. "And the next winning number is…"

"Gutted," Jake said, shaking his head as Oliver came off the stage. "Thought you were in with the star prize then, mate. They must be announcing that one at the end."

"Yeah." Oliver sighed. "And now I've got this horrible thing instead!" As he glumly put it down, the sun glinted off its gilt frame.



It seemed for a moment as if it were glittering extra-brightly, with hundreds of twinkles and sparkles shining all around, but then the sun slid behind a cloud and the sparkles disappeared.

His mum and dad inspected the painting curiously. "*Monster Mystery*, it's called," Mrs. Moon said, reading the label at the bottom of the frame.

"Yeah – it's a mystery why Arabella thought anyone would want to win that," Mr. Moon scoffed.

"Hmmm, well, it's not one I'd have chosen myself," Mrs. Moon said doubtfully. "But it's nice to win something, isn't it? And it's very kind of the High Witch Arabella to support our school…"

Mr. Moon snorted. "The High Witch Arabella is as nutty as a fruitcake," he said. "Always has been. Batty as a belfry. Barmy as a—"

"All right, not in front of the children," Mrs. Moon warned him in a low voice.

Oliver rolled his eyes at Jake. He wished the High Witch Arabella had kept her *Monster Mystery* to herself!

The raffle seemed to be drawing to a close. Oliver had been holding out a slim hope that Jake or even Mr. and Mrs. Moon would win the Lightnings tickets, but the last number called belonged to Arthur Silvertongue, one of the school prefects. Oliver couldn't help feeling a sickening twist of envy as Arthur went up onstage to collect the star prize and punched the air in triumph.

