

**MONSTER**

**MAX**

*THIS TIME IT'S SIRIUS*



**Robin Bennett:** When Robin grew up, he thought he wanted to be a soldier until everyone else realised that putting him in charge of a tank was a very bad idea. He then became an assistant gravedigger, a guy that smashes up houses, private tutor to the rich and famous, entrepreneur ... until finally settling down to write improbable stories to keep his children happy. He once heard himself described on the radio travel news as 'some twit' when his car broke down and blocked the traffic in London. This is about right. Robin is married with three children. He spends his time between France and England.

**@writer\_robin**



**Tom Tinn-Disbury:** Tom loves to draw (except bicycles, bicycles are really hard to draw!) He lives in Rugby, Warwickshire with his wife, two sons, grumpy dog Wilma and mad cats Sparky & Loki.

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**MAX**  
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**ROBIN BENNETT**

**ILLUSTRATED BY**  
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Dedication

For anything cute and furry  
RB

For Harry, another Monster Max in  
the making!  
T T-D



## ALL ABOUT MAX



Max is a very special boy: he can turn himself into a scary, hairy monster by BURPING. And he can turn himself back again by SNEEZING.

This is because he comes from a land

called Krit. Perched on the top of a very pointy mountain, it's the smallest, most hidden country in the world. Also, in Krit, being able to change into a monster, wolf, bear or bat isn't considered unusual at all. Max's mum comes from Krit and she can turn into a wolf.

Sometimes, Max burps by mistake, which can be a nasty surprise if you are standing next to him in the supermarket. And flowers make Max sneeze, so he often finds himself far from home in just his pants.

These days, he's trying to be a better monster ... with mixed results.

He's even got a logo:



## PROLOGUE

High up in the mountains, the tiny country of Krit was even more hidden than usual.

For it was a dark and stormy night.

Fanghorn, leader of the Red Eye wolves, and fearsome enemy of Monster Max, prowled the chilly corridors of his grim castle, getting crosser by the minute. Fanghorn was a wolf who didn't like people leaving Krit, and that meant Max's mum (and Max). And he also didn't like people who made him look stupid and that also meant Max's mum (and Max).





‘They think they’re free, running about doing good in this England place!’ he snarled. ‘But no-one leaves Krit without my permission. I want them here ... I want to punish them!’

But how to capture them, when all his efforts had failed so far?

I must have werewolves for this job, he thought. Not just any old ones; I need the strongest and the most loyal.

He burst out onto the castle battlements just as the moon appeared from behind

a black cloud, raised his huge jaws into the night, and he howled into the frozen air, 'Bring me the leader of the Varkas pack! Wooooo!'

Almost immediately, he heard answering howls from the ice regions of Krit and it didn't take long for the sound of running feet to reach his wolfish ears.

Fanghorn leapt from the battlements to greet his guest in the castle courtyard.

'Raise the gate!' he snarled at his guards.

But before they got their paws on the lifting lever, there was a terrible splintering noise and the gate exploded into pieces. A wolf raced into the courtyard and came to a screeching stop a whisker away from Fanghorn's nose.

The Varkas pack leader was even bigger than Fanghorn – like the werewolf equivalent of a cage fighter but with extra bits, like teeth and claws. Fanghorn had to stop himself from gulping.

‘Yes, sir!’ the Varkas wolf barked. (He probably would have saluted if he’d had hands, not four paws.) ‘At your service!’

‘YES!’ said Fanghorn, thinking: these guys are great, they’ll always follow orders. ‘I have a job for you and for twenty of your best fighters.’

‘Sir!’

‘You must go to England, to a place called Oxford, and find a Grey Eyed wolf who escaped from Krit, who now calls herself Sally Forbes, and her son, Max. Bring them to me!’ Fanghorn turned to go.

‘Sir?’

‘Yes? What is it?’ He turned back to the Varkas wolf impatiently.

‘Well, um...’ The huge wolf looked embarrassed. ‘Did you want us to go, like, right away?’

‘Of course, like right away. Otherwise, I would have waited until morning instead of doing this dramatic midnight howling... Anyway, why?’

‘It’s just that we have a new cub, lovely little fella, and my wife and I kind of run the pack together – like a family thing, you know – and, what I mean to say, your Royal Highness, is that it gives us a bit of a childcare issue ... um...’ He stopped as Fanghorn glared at him in furious silence.

‘Well, take the cub along – everyone

travels with kids these days. You'll probably get a discount.'

'Sir!' The Varkas pack leader looked relieved. 'Thank you, sir! So, twenty vicious wolves wot know no mercy and are extremely terrifying, against one kid and his mum?'

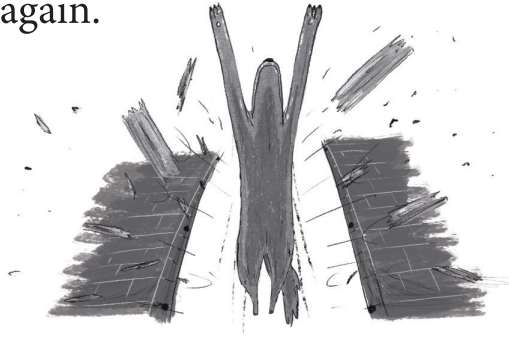
'Yes... Anything wrong with that?'

'Er, no, sir.' The huge wolf looked a bit unsure but wasn't going to push his luck with Fanghorn's terrible temper. 'Consider them got!'

The Varkas wolf turned and leapt.

'Wait, hold on ... argh! RAISE THE GATE!' Fanghorn barked at the guards, who had only just finished sticking the broken pieces together with rope and glue. He was too late. There was an awful crashing noise like a small

meteorite ploughing through a forest as the Varkas leader smashed the gate all over again.



‘Oh, for heaven’s sake. Don’t these Varkas ever use doors like normal werewolves?’ Fanghorn growled. He watched the warrior disappear into the night and, instead of dwelling on his broken gate, he thought about what he would do when he finally had his captives in Krit.

Fanghorn slowly grinned with several dozen very large fangs. He couldn’t wait to get his teeth into them.



## **TROUBLE COMES IN TREES**

Back in the relative normality of England, two boys made their way through quiet streets. They were on a mission.

‘It was a dark and stormy night, da, da, daaaaaaa!’ said Max.

Max’s joint best friend, Peregrine, looked at Max down his long nose and frowned at him.

‘No, it’s not. The moon’s so bright it’s practically daylight – you can even see Sirius, which is actually the brightest

star in the night sky. It's sometimes called the Dog Star...'

'OK, Mr Dull of Blimey You're so Boring Land. I'm just trying to make things more interesting,' said Max, looking around for his other joint best friend, his cat Frankenstein, who he suspected was having a better time eating smelly leftovers and terrifying local dogs than he was right now, having to listen to Peregrine going on about stars.

'Well, you should be concentrating on tonight's mission. It's very important,' muttered Peregrine.

'What, helping you build a treehouse in the dark? It just sounds like something that would be easier in the day.'



‘Look, if I’m going to finish our new Secret Lair Treehouse, I’m going to need to do it under the cover of darkness. For some reason adults don’t like eleven-year-olds carrying about military-grade surveillance units and high-tension electronic cabling in broad daylight... It makes them ask difficult-to-answer questions. And I need you to help carry all this stuff.’

‘Still a bit boring.’

‘But necessary. I’ve been up here a lot over the last few weeks and the woods don’t seem quite ... right.’

‘What do you mean?’

‘I don’t know, maybe it’s nothing but I haven’t seen any rabbits for ages – there’s usually loads hopping about – and there were some claw marks on a tree near here.’

‘It wasn’t me.’

‘I know. Yours are bigger and these didn’t seem random. It was almost as if the marks meant something – like they were a message.’

‘Creepy.’

‘A bit suspicious – so that’s why we need to finish the Treehouse Lair. Fanghorn’s not going to leave you alone forever. He’s been plotting for sure. We need a base of our own – one that’s not your parents’ kitchen.’

‘OK, this Secret Lair Treehouse does sound necessary,’ Max admitted. ‘But you can see my point. It’s hardly Protecting and Doing Good Stuff – more like Creeping about Doing Nerdy Stuff – your speciality...’

He paused as Frankenstein appeared

on a wall in silhouette with something probably very old and definitely very disgusting sticking out of his mouth.



‘Anyway...’ Max continued, ‘it’s still long past our bedtimes and those trees over there look pretty sinister. Anything could be lurking in them ... watching us ... just waiting until our backs are turned...’

‘No, you can’t turn into a monster.’

‘Oh.’

‘And you’ve really got to get over this fear of the dark thing.’

‘Why? It’s like asking an astronaut to get over this lack of oxygen thing. The dark’s really scary. Fact.’

‘You’re a five-hundred-kilo monster – about a third of the time,’ said Peregrine. ‘You shouldn’t be scared of anything.’

‘And you’re bossier than my teacher – all of the time,’ muttered Max.

‘We’re here,’ said Peregrine, ignoring him. They’d come to the end of a track in the woods. A tall antenna, next to what looked like a water tower on metal legs, swayed in the breeze. Peregrine pulled off his rucksack and

fished about inside for his tools. ‘I’ve got to get the cameras and radar set up around the treehouse. I’m going to use that old TV antenna to bounce the signal off – perfect. Remember, we’re undercover: so no chit-chat and absolutely no monsterring unless I need you to lift or bend something heavy. And if anyone comes along, tell them we’re walking Frankenstein.’

‘Suppose,’ muttered Max. He looked about. They had trudged fairly deep into the woods above Oxford and were standing in a clearing with four large oaks at each corner. ‘Can I climb up into the treehouse, at least?’

‘N-uh-uh ... nope.’ Peregrine was busy fiddling with some wires, a torch in his mouth. ‘S’not really ready, you’ll

probably fiddle with things... You keep a lookout down here. Let me know if anyone is coming.'

Max sighed. This was going to be a long, dull night.

But, to his surprise, after a bit, Max began to enjoy himself. Even when he wasn't being huge and hairy, with great big teeth like a sabre-toothed tiger, he still had all his monster super-senses. He could smell far-off chimney smoke that made him think of fireworks and Halloween just around the corner; he could see beyond the woods, through gently moving trees, all the way to the River Thames, winding its way like a silver road; and he could hear ... whimpering?

‘Pssst!’ pssted Max, but Peregrine seemed totally fascinated by a pile of old circuit boards. ‘Pssst, pssst, ahem. Oi!’

‘What?’ His friend finally looked up, glaring at Max.

‘Did you hear that?’

‘I can’t hear anything with you shouting your head off every five minutes.’

Max pointed theatrically towards a really dark patch of trees. ‘There’s something in the bushes.’

‘Well, go and take a look.’ Peregrine went back to what he’d been doing.

Max sighed. The trees were dark, but he wouldn’t burp, he told himself. Peregrine was right – he should save

turning into a monster for special occasions. Just then, Frankenstein came slinking over.

‘Come on,’ said Max, to his cat. ‘But you go first.’

Frankenstein seemed to shrug as if to say fine, whatever, and began to creep cattily in the direction of the gentle whimpering.

Max followed. They crept towards the old water tower, looming in the darkness like an alien on stilts. Max’s sharp eyes could make out something small and round nestling in the leaves by one of the metal feet.





As he got closer, the crying noises stopped, almost as if whatever was making them had heard Max and was holding its breath, waiting...

Max forgot his fear and crept past Frankenstein, who had gone very still, his skinny back arched, his hair beginning to stand on end.

‘It’s OK,’ Max whispered, although whether he was talking to Frankenstein or to whatever was hiding in the grass he wasn’t sure.

Max took one step forward, then another and another. He looked down at what he had found and scratched his head.

‘Peregrine,’ he said, and this time there was something in his voice that made his friend look up right away. ‘I

think you should come over here and look at this.’

Two bright eyes set in a fluffy face looked up at Max, Peregrine and Frankenstein, and blinked. The puppy had stopped crying but Max could see it was trembling.



He leant down, extending his hand slowly and stroked its fur. That did the trick – the puppy stopped shaking and licked Max’s hand instead.

‘It likes me,’ said Max. ‘Let’s keep him.’

‘Hmmm,’ Peregrine didn’t sound so sure. ‘It must be lost, but someone will be looking for it.’

‘We can teach it tricks, but first it needs a name,’ Max declared, ignoring Peregrine. Something made him look up at the sky. ‘What was the name of that star again, the really bright one, up there?’

‘Sirius,’ answered Peregrine.

‘That’s a good name for him, as you said it’s the Dog Star.’

‘Except this isn’t a dog,’ said Peregrine.

‘Of course it is,’ Max said. ‘It’s got four legs and a tail. It’s fluffy and licky.’

‘Yes, but look at those ears, the shape of its head and the size of its paws.’

‘What about them? You’re not going

to convince me it's a guinea pig.'

'No,' said Peregrine, peering closer.  
'It's a wolf.'

Both friends looked at the wolf cub  
and thought their own private thoughts.

Frankenstein hissed, making Sirius  
growl back in a cute puppy way and  
show his tiny pointed teeth.



‘Aw, they hate each other... Sweet,’ said Max. ‘I still think we should keep him.’

‘I really don’t think that’s a good idea. It’s been proved through scientific study that wolves cannot be tamed, even if they spend time with humans.’ Peregrine pushed his glasses further up his nose, something he always did when preparing to make a speech. ‘The real question here, of course, is what a wolf is doing on its own in the middle of Oxfordshire, not whether it would make a good pet. It’s far from its natural habitat, the nearest being central Europe...’

‘Shh,’ said Max.

‘No, you shush, I was talking.’

‘I can hear something running ...’

actually lots of somethings running ...  
and very fast ... towards us.'

'Max...'

BURP!

'Gres?'

'Well, I was going to say, now would  
be a good time to turn into a monster,  
but – for once – you're ahead of me.'

'Grankyu.'

'Don't mention it, now can we go?'

'Grot about Griarius?'

'Sirius stays,' said Peregrine firmly.

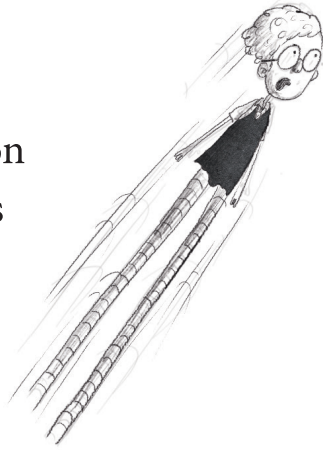
'Might be grery grangerous for the  
grittle furball.'

'Sorry, no time to argue, it's time  
to show you my Bionic Utility Tall  
Trousers.'

'You mean your BUTT, hee hee?'

'See you back at HQ!' shouted

Peregrine, pressing a button on his belt. His trousers suddenly shot him into the air until he was twice the height of Monster Max.



‘Be careful!’ cried Max.

With that, Peregrine stepped over several small trees as if they weren’t there and raced off into the night.

Max looked around and listened hard. The sound of running feet had slowed but his monster senses told him danger was close. Very close. Frankenstein was nowhere to be seen, which was a relief, and Sirius was looking at him expectantly, not seeming in the least worried that Max had just turned from a small boy into a large monster. Just in case he was about to get scared, Max

stroked Sirius, who nibbled Max's claws as if it was a game.

His monster ears picked up a growl from deep in the woods. Followed by another growl: low and very scary. Then a long drawn-out howl that sounded like anger mixed with pain.

Monster Max stepped in front of Sirius protectively, searched the clearing and saw a large bit of fallen tree, which he picked up. He also saw a rusty metal gate, which he picked up in his other paw, just in case.





‘Gright,’ he said, scowling into the trees, Peregrine might have told him to escape, but he was Monster Max. ‘To Grotect and do Good Stuff!’ he roared into the night, just as something very fast and very strong shot out of the darkness and hit him harder than he’d ever been hit in his whole monsterring life.

‘Roar!’ roared Max and threw the gate. There was a loud metal DOINK noise and something yelped in pain.

Max was just about to run after the shape, when something else, almost as big as Max and almost as hairy, hit him from behind, even harder than before. It was like being run into by a shaggy lorry.

Max swung his tree at the running shape ... and missed.

Instead, he hit the water tower, which swayed one way ... swayed another ... creaked ... then toppled...

Right on top of Max.

His world went black.

