



“I used to believe in monsters,” Alex said. She pushed her glasses up on her nose. Her nose twitched. With her pink face and round cheeks, she looked like a tall, blond bunny rabbit.

“When I was little, I thought that a monster lived in my sock drawer,” Alex told me. “You won’t believe this, Zackie. But I never opened that drawer. I used to wear my sneakers without socks. Sometimes I tried to go barefoot to kindergarten. I was too scared to open that drawer. I knew the sock monster would bite my hand off!”

She laughed. Alex has the strangest laugh. It sounds more like a whistle than a laugh. “*Wheeeeeeh! Wheeeeeeh!*”

She shook her head, and her blond ponytail shook with her. “Now that I’m twelve, I’m a lot smarter,” she said. “Now I know that there is no such thing as monsters.”

That’s what Alex said to me *two seconds* before we were attacked by the monster.

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It was spring vacation, and Alex and I were out collecting things. That's what we do when we can't think of anything better.

Sometimes we collect weird-looking weeds. Sometimes we collect bugs. Or odd-shaped leaves.

Once, we collected stones that looked like famous people. That didn't last long. We couldn't find too many.

If you get the idea that Norwood Village is a boring town — you're right!

I mean, it *was* boring until the monster attacked.

Alex Iarocci lives next door to me. And she is my best friend.

Adam Levin, who lives across town, is my best friend, too. I think a person should have a *lot* of best friends!

I'm not sure why Alex has a boy's name. I think it's short for Alexandria. But she won't tell me.

She complains about her name all the time. It gives her a lot of trouble.

Last year at school, Alex was assigned to a boys' gym class. And she gets mail addressed to *Mr.* Alex Iarocci.

Sometimes people have trouble with my name, too. Zackie Beauchamp. My last name is pronounced BEECH-am. But no one ever knows how to say it.

Why am I going on about names like this?

I think I know why.

You see, when the Blob Monster attacked, I was so scared, I forgot my own name!

Alex and I had decided to collect worms. Only purple worms — no brown ones.

That made the search more interesting.

It had rained the day before, a long, steady, spring rain. Our backyards were still soft and spongy.

The worms were coming up for air. They poked through the wet grass. And wriggled onto the driveway.

We were both crouched down, searching for purple ones — when I heard a loud, squishy sound behind me.

I spun around quickly.

And gasped when I saw the monster.
“Alex — look!”

She turned, too. And a whistling sound escaped her mouth. “*Wheeeeh!*” Only *this* time, she wasn’t laughing.

I dropped the worm I had been carrying and took a *biig* step back.

“It — it looks like a giant human heart!” Alex cried.

She was right.

The monster made another loud *squish* as it bounced over the grass toward us. It bounced like

a giant beach ball, taller than Alex and me. Nearly as tall as the garage!

It was pink and wet. And throbbing.

BRUM BRRUUM BRUMMMM. It pulsed like a heart.

It had two tiny black eyes. The eyes glowed and stared straight ahead.

On top of the pink blob, I thought I saw curled-up snakes. But as I stared in horror, I realized they weren't snakes. They were thick, purple veins — arteries tied together in a knot.

BRRUUUM BRUM BRUMM.

The monster throbbed and bounced.

“Ohhhhhh!” I groaned as I saw the sticky trail of white slime it left behind on the grass.

Alex and I were taking giant steps — backward. We didn't want to turn our backs on the ugly thing.

“*Unh unh unh!*” Terrified groans escaped my throat. My heart had to be pounding at a hundred miles an hour!

I took another step back. Then another.

And as I backed away, I saw a crack open up in the creature's middle.

At first I thought the pink blob was cracking apart.

But as the crack grew wider, I realized I was staring at its mouth.

The mouth opened wider. Wider.

Wide enough to swallow a human!

And then a fat purple tongue plopped out. The tongue made a wet *SPLAT* as it hit the grass.

“*Ohhhhh.*” I groaned again. My stomach lurched. I nearly lost my lunch.

The end of the tongue was shaped like a shovel. A fat, sticky, purple shovel.

To shovel people into the gaping mouth?

Thick, white slime poured from the monster’s mouth. “It — it’s *drooling!*” I choked out.

“Run!” Alex cried.

I turned — and tripped on the edge of the driveway.

I landed hard on my elbows and knees.

And looked back — in time to see the drooling, pink mouth open wider as the tongue wrapped around me . . . pulling me, pulling me in.