

**VALENTINA
SALAZAR**
is NOT a monster hunter



ZORAIDA CÓRDOVA

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The Real, True, Honest-to-Goodness
Confession of Valentina Alexander Salazar,
Junior Monster Protector

This is the real, true, honest-to-goodness confession of Valentina Alexander Salazar and the worst summer ever.

Confession #1: Monsters are real. I'm probably not supposed to tell you that, but in order for me to explain the rest of my story, I have to make that clear. I repeat: Monsters are real.

Ever gone camping and felt like someone was watching you? Ever catch sight of a strange creature out the corner of your eye? Ever walked down a street and seen something dash into the sewers? Chupacabras, Bigfoot, the Jersey Devil, the Loch Ness monster—I'm sure you've heard of the most famous ones, but there are so many more creatures that you didn't know were out there.

Now, I know some people might think that such beings *couldn't* possibly exist. But they do. I've seen them. Deep down, I bet you believe me, unlike most grown-ups. Like my daddy always said, "Just because it's in your imagination doesn't mean it's any less real."

That brings me to confession #2: My family and I are monster protectors.

Or we used to be. You see, there was a big accident a few months back and we had to stop. But before the accident, we drove all over the country searching for magical beings to save. If you're wondering why these creatures need saving, then you, my friend, are asking the right questions. After all, aren't monsters just fangs and claws and nightmares? Some of them are, and I'm not going to lie—this job isn't for the faint of heart. You've got to understand, not all monsters are, well, *monstrous*. Some creatures look scary, but they're just misunderstood or scared or lost. That's where we come in. We find them and we help get them back home.

Don't ever confuse us with the no-good, smelly, jerkface monster hunters. No way. You see, the Salazars (that's my family) come from a long line of monster hunters. For hundreds of years, they roamed the planet and tracked down creatures who slipped into our world. *Killed* them. *Blip! Slash! Splat!* Even

if a monster wasn't hurting anyone and took a wrong turn into our sorry earthly realm, the hunters had one rule: Slay the beasts.

My dad was different. He wanted to help, and so, he broke off from his family tree and became the first ever Salazar to save creatures instead of hurt them.

Then he met my mom, and she joined the family business. Then came my eldest sister, Andromeda, then Lola, then Rome, and they saved the best for last—me.

I shouldn't be telling you this, but I need to clear my name after everything that's happened. Anyway, like I said, there was an accident involving my dad and just like that—*snap*—he was gone.

And finally, I present confession #3: This is the worst summer of my whole eleven-and-a-half-year-old life. Things started to go downhill when I tried to steal the van.

Wait, no. Things *really* went downhill when I was blamed for starting the fire.

Hold on. That's not right either.

I should back up some more, so you really see *my* side of the story.

So here it goes. Let me tell you what happened.