

A Monster Mystery
Written by Adelaide Stowe

Susan drove down the steps of her marble mansion on a bright sunny day. She wasn't legally permitted to drive yet, being at the nimble age of 12, but the government didn't care much as long as she drove responsibly and didn't eat any souls. She stopped at a red light and listened to the hum of her Ferrari engine, then realized she didn't turn on the radio. She left it off, because today's upbeat pop songs were all about the same thing and not creative or inventive. Instead Susan put down the roof of her car and listened to the sounds of the city. The light flicked green and she sped down the nearly empty streets, taking extremely sharp and dangerous turns along the way. So much for driving responsibly.

As Susan arrived at school, she became aware of a large problem. At home, she drove around her house in her car because she didn't have legs. Here, at school, she wasn't exactly sure if she could drive around the halls in a bright red Ferrari. Susan parked her car in the school parking lot and wondered what to do in the good twenty minutes she had before class. Should she just risk being in trouble? Call the principal? Luckily a neon green furry mass came running- well, not running, she guessed he was just quickly shuffling. The fuzzy bright mass had a white tag around his neck that said STUDENT AMBASSADOR. He was pushing a wheelchair.

"Hello" the mass said. "I was told that one of our new students needed a wheelchair."

"Um, yes, I guess that's me. I don't have legs. I'm just kind of a.. collection." Susan replied, a little wary of the chair. It didn't look comfortable. She figured she would have to buy one of those tiny cars that little humans sometimes use. Susan climbed awkwardly into the chair and zoomed away from the green mass after a quick "Thanks."

Susan had about forty seconds to get to math class. She wheeled straight into the cramped classroom right as the bell rang, which sounded like something screaming. *"Ideal for monster school,"* she thought. Susan took a little time to look at the teacher, who didn't seem to notice that everybody in the room was practically yelling at each other. The teacher just went on with her business, writing things down, reading a book, looking at her computer for the whole period. The teacher finally looked up when the second bell rang, and that was when she yelled as loud as she possibly could: "QUIET IN THE HALLS!" Everybody immediately fell silent and crept out of the room.

After math, history, science, and a never-ending period of gym, Susan finally rolled into lunch and straight to a spot at a table in the corner. She got out her lunchbag and unpacked her lunch which consisted of zebra cakes and strawberries.

"At least this spot is by a window" she thought.

A minute later, her thoughts were interrupted by a wolf who made little noise then surprised her by saying: "Do you mind if I sit here? It's okay if it's not, I can find someplace else.."

"Oh no, it's quite alright, I could use company if you feel like talking." Susan replied.

"Well let's start with names. I'm Lobois, you are?" the wolf said.

"Susan." she said plainly. "I like your glasses."

"Thanks. I don't like them as much, I would have preferred black, so they would match everything. Yellow is bright, and matches little, which is why I usually wear orange or red to match."

Susan looked at him wide eyed. She hadn't expected a lot of words out of him because he seemed so shy.

"Are you okay? Are you choking?"

"No, I'm fine, it's just you seemed so shy.."

"Oh yes, when you get to know me I'm quite talkative, because I can tell if someone is nice or not. I knew immediately you were the sort who wouldn't beat me up or anything." he replied.

"Um, thank you."

A few moments later, there was a sound like a trash heap sliding along the stone floor of the lunchroom.

"Can I sit with you guys?" the trash heap said. "My name is Gampy, by the way."

"Hey, Gampy. We're just talking, care to join?" Susan told the newcomer.

The three talked for a little while when someone else came by.

"Hi" the green monster said between crunches. "Hi" he said again.

"Hello" Lobo said back. "Why are you eating the table?"

"Um" the green monster replied. "I don't have a lunch."

Susan, being as nice as she was, said "Ok. Don't choke on a screw or anything. What's your name?"

"My name is Chomper and I'm new here and I like to eat appliances and I don't like math because I think it's boring and the teacher only gives us busywork so we don't really do much in class we just kinda sit there and do our busywork which is only for a participation grade so-"

"WHOA." Gampy cut him off. "You do talk a lot."

"Yeah my mom says I should really stop talking in class and when she asks me to do things around the house I just talk until she gets bored and does it herself OR talk her out of making me do it or something along those lines-

"I'm finished with my lunch, and it looks like you guys are too." Susan said, and then everyone noticed that the table and their lunchbags had been eaten.

"Let's go outside." Lobo said.

Outside, it was partly cloudy and the group of friends stood in the middle of the schoolyard wondering what to do. The schoolyard itself was a giant stretch of concrete and a square of dirt in the corner with a tree in it. As you can guess, there wasn't much to do.

"We've got 45 minutes left. Any ideas?" Susan said.

"Well, this is boring. I don't like boring things. You know what's boring? Snails. They just wiggle around and leave a slimy gross trail but they're not cool or anything like they can't fly or whatever but OHHH I know something we could do! We can go to this thing with the people and the thirty-three years in detention and the big trouble person and the principal and the-" Chomper drained.

"Ok, where is that happening?" Gampy asked.

"Uh, I don't really know but what I do know is that peregrine falcons-"

"Chomper, we're gonna stop you there for our own good." Susan interrupted.

"We could find out what he went to detention for!" Gampy exclaimed. "It could be our little mystery!"

"We're never gonna find it, though. This is a sixteen-story building with 1,200 rooms." Lobo pointed out.

"Well then, we'll just have to-"

"TEACHERS PLEASE EXCUSE THE INTERRUPTION, ALL AVAILABLE TEACHERS AND STAFF PLEASE COME TO THE 17TH DOOR ON THE SIXTH FLOOR. THANK YOU."

"Chomper, you didn't say that this was a teacher's only event." Lobo said.

"We can still go! There's a janitor's closet right next to the room with a vent that goes directly to the classroom we wanna go to. What a funny idea, putting a vent in that just goes into another room instead of bringing in fresh air!"

"How do you know that?" Gampy asked.

"Guys, we gotta hurry, we only have 30 minutes left!" Susan pointed out.

They arrived at the classroom five minutes later and went into the janitor's closet. The closet was roomy but the friends crunched together in front of the vent to eavesdrop. The voices were quiet but clear.

"Are you sure we should let him out?"

"His time's up, it's the right thing to do. We can't just leave him there!"

"Well, he scares me. I don't want him in my classes."

"You can't take the boy out of math!"

"There are other math classes in this giant brick prison!"

"It's not a prison, it's a school!"

"Same thing!"

"Ugh. Can I LEAVE yet? You guys have been yammering FOREVER. Thirty three years are up, baby!"

"Baby? Three more hours detention!"

"JANET!"

"WHAT?"

"Nothing. No more detention for the kid. He's suffered enough."

"I'M STILL NOT OUT!"

There was a muffled creaking noise, an exasperated "Finally!" from whoever was in detention, and some gasps from around the room.

"What?"

"Uh. Nothing."

"Now, Dan, we don't want any more trouble from you. At least not like last time."

"It wasn't that bad last time!"

"Yes it was. Don't talk about your horrible crimes to anyone."

"Ugh. Fine."

Susan was first to break the silence. "We have to figure this out."

"Pronto." Lobo said.

"Why are we doing this again?" Chomper asked as he dragged his fairly large body behind his friends.

"Because we want to know what Dan's 'horrible crimes' were." Lobo replied.

"What if he murdered someone?" Gampy asked, frantically looking around the classroom where Dan was released.

"He said it wasn't that bad. Also, that's a prison matter, not a detention matter." Susan said.

"Are you sure, Susan? This is monster school." Gampy said.

"Yes, I'm sure. Anyway, anyone else not understand the detention around here? He was in there- she gestured at a small metal room in the back- and didn't go to class for like, thirty three years! What's up with that?" Susan replied.

"I don't know, but I guess he did something super bad, like drew a cat on the side of the building." Lobo said

"That's not THAT bad." Gampy said.

"In Sharpie." Lobo finished.

Everybody gasped.

"Let's focus guys. Wait, where's Chomper?" Susan said.

Gampy looked at the clock. "Uh, he probably went to class, because it's five minutes until our next class starts."

"Shoot! I gotta go, guys. My next class is on the top floor and my locker is on the third." Lobo said as he rushed out the door.

"Bye, Lo! Oh, I'm sorry, Gampy. My locker is on the fifth and class is on the seventh. See ya!" and she wheeled out of the room.

"Great. I have study hall next and the teachers in study hall don't care enough to see what their students are doing and when they show up. Which means I get time to figure a little bit out." Gampy said to himself.

"GAMPY LING, PLEASE REPORT TO STUDY HALL ON THE TENTH FLOOR, GAMPY LING"

"Well, almost." he stated.

Susan opened her copy of *The Crucible* and started reading, every so often looking up at her English teacher, a dragon who always looked aggravated.

"Um, Miss Blister? Why did you give us this book? It doesn't really seem to hold any meaning." a student said.

Miss Blister, in her stony voice said "Read the book, it does have great meaning, but I guess a dense child like you would never find it."

The student looked mortified to be called "dense" by a teacher.

"Miss Blister, that's insulting. You shouldn't call a pupil dense."

"Well, child, welcome to the real world." she replied.

The student behind Susan said "Have you even bothered to learn our names?"

Susan ducked as the monster behind her was promptly set ablaze and ran screaming out of the room.

"And if anyone else would not like to be set on fire, I suggest you read the book that was assigned. And don't forget to take notes!"

Susan, out of sheer fear, kept her nose in the book, her pen on the paper, and thoughts of her friends and the mystery out of her mind.

When the final bell rang, Susan put her backpack on the back of her wheelchair and wheeled out to her car. She threw her backpack into the backseat and gave the wheelchair to the same bright fuzzy mass that had followed her out to her car. She drove home(dangerously)and went straight to work on homework when she arrived home. The questions "*What was Dan's crime that got him thirty three years in detention? And how did he not graduate?*" kept bugging her all through the evening. She had no idea what was going on with Dan, or The School of Monsters, or this math assignment that was due tomorrow.

Susan was sitting in a mini car she had bought, slightly drowsy, glad that homework was finished when her senses sharpened as she heard a knock on the door. Susan zoomed down the steps and into the kitchen then to the foyer, armed with a frying pan.

"Who's there?" she asked, not wanting to risk ultimate death.

"Lobois." the voice on the other side of the door answered.

"Oh. Hello." she said as she opened the door.

"What's the frying pan for?"

"Oh, uh, nothing." Susan said as she flashed a smile. "Come on in."

"Sure thing. Um, where's the bathroom? I drank a lot of water before running over here."

"Go upstairs and it's the 23rd door on your right. After that, come back down and go through that doorway, because that's where I'll be." she replied.

After Lobois returned, he told Susan what he had found out on Dan.

"I saw him." he said.

"When? Where? What did he look like?" Susan replied.

"He's human."

"He's WHAT?"

"Well, thirty three years in detention did take its toll on him."

"What does that mean?"

"He's still fourteen after thirty three years!"

"How weird! Do humans age differently?"

"Wait... are humans usually really pale, shimmery, and levitating all the time?"

"No... Lobois, I think Dan's a ghost."

"Oh I've never see one of those before!"

Susan sighed, then said: "Get in the car. We have research to do."

Susan and Lobois drove to the school library, which was so large it occupied the whole fourth floor.

"We have got to find SOMETHING in here." Susan said.

"Yeah, but it's gonna take forever!" Lobois replied.

"Here, let's start at the computers. There's bound to be something there." she said in her usual optimistic way.

"Yeah, bound to be."

They stared at the screens for about an hour, typing, clicking, scrolling.

"Hey, Suz. I think I found something."

"*Large Yellow Dragon Kidnaps Little Boy*" Susan read. "What a coincidence. My English teacher is a yellow dragon. She's not big, though."

"Hmm. We better research this." Lobois said.

"Maybe tomorrow, Lo. The school library is about to close and the public one closed hours ago."

"Okay. Bye."

"Bye."

"Susan!"

Susan looked around to see who was calling her name.

"Suuuuuusaaaaan!"

"Oh, hi Gampy." she said as she spotted him frantically waving his arms.

"Last night Lo called me and I looked up the news story and guess what I found out!"

"What?"

"You gotta guesss!"

"Gampy, I'm not in the mood..."

"Fine. YOUR English teacher kidnapped Dan! Also, why are you not in the mood?"

"I stayed up all night reading Wings of Fire so I'm super tired!!"

"What's that?"

"Doesn't matter! Anyway, we have to ask Dan why he can't graduate or anything."

"Okay. He's in Chomper's study hall so maybe we can get him to ask him."

"Alright. Go find Chomper and tell him what to do and then we can research my English teacher and Dan in the school library."

"Susan, it's only ten minutes until class starts."

"Shoot! I never arrive early enough! Gampy, I have to get to my math class. Bye!"

"Bye."

Susan and Lobois walked into the lunchroom, sat at their usual table, and began talking.

"So, I researched ghosts online during my study hall on my phone." Susan said.

"Whatcha find out?" Lobois replied between bites.

"Apparently, they can't be at rest until they finish unfinished business in the place they died."

"Do you think Dan died here?"

"I have no idea, but we have to find out somehow."

"How?"

"I don't know! I don't think Miss Blister will tell us anything because she is basically made of metal and fire."

"Yeah, but Dan might."

"Yeah..hey, where are Chomper and Gampy?"

"Oh, they left early today. They're going to some festival together with Chomper's parents."

"Cool, but we have to find Dan after school."

"I don't think we have to wait that long.."

Dan floated over to the table in the corner where Susan and Lobois sat.

"So." he said. "I heard you're investigating my crime."

"W-where'd you here that?" Lobois replied.

"Your big green friend told me all about it. Too much, actually."

"Yes, Chomper tends to talk a lot." Susan said.

"Well, I could just tell you my crime.."

"Oh, please do. It would save us so much trouble." Susan replied.

"But, the problem is, I don't remember. But I can still help you with your little mystery."

"How?" Lobois said.

"Miss Blister is my mother, and I know where she keeps her journal."

"Wait. Miss Blister is your mom?" Lobois asked.

"Yes. After she kidnapped me, she adopted me as her own. I would've died if she hadn't saved me."

"We'll read more in her journal, right?" Lobois said.

"Yeah."

"Where does she keep it?" Susan asked.

"She keeps it in her desk drawer. The middle one, on the left." Dan answered.

"Wait, why are you helping us so much?" Lobois wondered aloud.

"I want to remember. I want to remember how I died. I want to remember what it was like outside of the school. I haven't left it since 1855 or something."

"We'll help you. Right, Lo?"

"Right."

Susan arrived in English five minutes early, which in Miss Blister's standards, a little late.

"Ahh, Susan. Did you bother to read the assigned pages and take notes?"

"Yes, Miss Blister." Susan answered.

"Very well. I see no one else is here yet, take your seat. All late. Hmph."

As the bell rang, everyone else clambered into the classroom and pulled out their notebooks, post-its, pencils, and books.

"I expect you all to have your pages finished and good notes taken." Miss Blister said

"Uh, Miss Blister?" said a student.

"Yes, Tanya?"

"I had underwater basket weaving yesterday so I don't have GOOD notes, but I do have notes."

"I expect better from you next time, Tanya."

"Yes Miss Blister."

"MISS BLISTER, PLEASE COME TO THE MAIN OFFICE, MISS BLISTER."

"Students, I have to go. Susan, take over. Be responsible for yourselves and respectful to Susan please."

"Yes, Miss Blister." the whole class chorused.

Susan took this as an opportunity to snatch the journal and read it quickly.

"Okay, class. Miss Blister wrote the page numbers on the board so please read those pages and take good notes!" Susan announced.

Susan sat down in the teacher's brown leather chair and silently opened the middle drawer on the left after she checked that no one was looking.

"July 10th, 1854

I write this as the little boy sleeps by the fire. If I had not saved him, he would have fallen to the famine he had lost his parents to. He will not speak, but I find that understandable. He has just been taken from his hometown to live in a (comfortable) cave in an unfamiliar mountain. I plan on shrinking in size and taking him to live in my other home, a basement underneath the School of Monsters. The basement is quite large, it will be convenient to live below work. I'm sure he will enjoy it more than this drab but cozy and comfortable cave."

Susan took a moment to take that in.

"January 15th, 1855

I have moved the boy to the basement. I have learned his name is Daniel, and he has asked I call him Dan. He seems to enjoy the toys I have brought him and his very own room. In two years, he will be old enough to attend the school where I work. I am much more excited than he is, I fear. All he seems to care about now is a bike."

"Hello, Room 417?" said the intercom.

"Yes?" replied Susan.

"Miss Blister will be out for the rest of the period."

"Ok, thank you!"

The intercom went silent.

"Yes!" Susan thought. "A whole period to read to journal."

"September 18th, 1857

This entry is late because I have been occupied with the boy. I needed to get school supplies for him and my classroom and he wanted to come with. I told him no, and he threw a fit. He said I had never taken him outside and that he has not seen daylight in years. I told him that at school they have big windows but he said it wasn't enough. He said he wants to go outside. I told him no again. He asked me why. I said if he were to go outside he would die, and it is the truth. He has been bonded to the school, the building. He is human, the School of Monsters does not take kindly to them. The school kills humans off once they exit the school to make sure that he does not tell everyone about it. He must not leave. Ever.

November 22nd, 1857

I am sad. My boy has gone outside. He wanted to know what snow felt like. He died for snow. Now I cannot even look at snow. It has taken my boy away, turned him into a ghost.

May 30th, 1982

I have forgotten about the journal for many years, but now I must write. My boy has caused trouble for the school, and now he must remain in detention for thirty three years. I have still not

yet been told what he has done to deserve such sentence. He is still a ghost. I read somewhere that ghosts cannot leave unless they finish what they have started. I wonder what my boy must finish."

The next entry was in different writing.

"December-something, I don't know what year it is.

Mom gave me this book to write in while I sit here forever. I wonder what I should write about. Maybe..my death? That's an interesting subject.

Becoming a ghost was weird and kinda painful. There was a bright light and the searing pain throughout my body but it only lasted for a second. Next thing I know, I see my own body on a gurney, hands bright red, eyes closed, hair singed, and my mother crying as she followed the gurney down the hallway until she was told she couldn't come any farther. Screaming. Crying. Wailing. Moaning. And a distant voice, saying 'Daniel'.

I still wonder to this day what the light was. I wonder if everyone who dies gets the bright light and the searing pain. Seeing themselves dead, having the realization that you're dead. And not coming back anytime soon. Oh, and the creepy voice."

That was the last entry in the journal. Susan knew she needed to tell her friends and Dan all she had learned.

"That's it?" Dan seemed outraged.

"Yes, but at least I figured a lot of stuff out and I found out how you died. That's good, right?" Susan pointed out.

"Yes, but..I expected more. What was my crime?"

"I figured that out for you guys." Gampy interrupted.

"Oh? How?" Susan asked.

"I ate some mystery novels and used the knowledge I learned to break into school records, find Dan's, and figure out the crime." he answered.

"Did you cover your tracks? Because once I didn't, and my mom caught me eating cookies in my room that I stole from the cookie jar. I stole the cookies, not the room. Imagine that, stealing a room! Wait, how would that even work?" Chomper rambled.

"Yes, Chomper, I covered my tracks." Gampy said, rolling his eyes.

"So? What's the crime?" Lobois cried impatiently.

"Dan stole a coffee mug from a teacher and used it to throw water in the teacher's face." Gampy said.

"Wow. I was horrible back then." Dan mused.

"Well, you seem super cool right now so you could be our friend but you can't come over to my house because my mom is afraid of ghosts and that's like her worst fear EVER so I think she would just hurt your feelings on accident-" Chomper began.

"I think what Chomper is trying to say is that you're a really good person and we want you be awesome and stay gold." Lobois said.

"Yeah." Gampy said.

"Wait. Um, guys?" Dan said, uncertainty in his eyes.

"What's up?" Gampy asked, looking as worried as everyone else.

"Ghosts don't leave until they finish what they needed to.." Dan said, twirling his fingers and looking at the floor.

"Yeah? And?" Lobois said, queasy about the answer that was coming.

"I figured it all out, thanks to you guys. I want to stay, but I know I have to go. I have to go. And Susan?"

"Yes?"

"Take this." and he handed her a blue rose. "It'll never die."

Susan smiled warmly at him.

The four friends were expecting some sort of big show with flashy supernatural lights and such but Dan only vanished with a loud *POP!*

Years went by, and by their final year of high school, friends were made, laughter rang, and everyone knew what they wanted to be.

And Dan was nothing but a memory to all except Susan, who felt his presence when she picked up the flower he had given her many years before.