

Me & My Monster

ANDREA L. ROGERS

“He’s a monster,” Gina whispered, describing the one she loved. Her grandmother sipped her medicine.

“All boys are monsters, sweetie. I’ve been telling you that since you were no taller than a tiger lily.”

Gina wrote a letter to the *Star-Telegram*. The city was currently in the midst of Lake Worth Monster madness. The paper ran daily monster updates and blurry photos that might have been tall skinny people in gorilla suits running away from the camera. Blonde Sasquatches with goat horns and cloven hooves were described. These were details not discernible from the pictures, but relayed through eyewitness accounts of people claiming to have seen a goat boy, who reeked like white crappie, in the dark, half a mile away.

Gina, however, knew the “Goat Man.” She had held his hoof while they watched the moon rise over the lake from a secluded bluff. She left that detail out of her letter.

Dear Mr. Editor,

The Lake Worth “monster” is no monster. He is a perfect gentleman. If he threw a tire at you, then you had it coming. I was talked into going to the lake to look for the “monster.” Moments after we parked my date had his hands all over me. Let that be a warning to you other girls: Teenage boys have more than monsters on their minds!

I argued with my date and got out of his vehicle. He followed me and knocked me to the ground. I screamed for help. It immediately arrived in the form of an individual your readers are calling the “Goat Man.” He towered over us and my terrified date fled. He gave chase. My date drove away, leaving me behind.

I panicked. I curled into a ball and wept for several minutes. Finally, I looked up and saw those beautiful red rimmed, baby blue eyes staring at me from several yards away. I got up and dusted myself off. I walked in the direction of the highway. He stayed a ways behind me, following me slowly. When I turned back to see if he was still there he waved at me shyly. Once I got to the road I flagged down what turned out to be a nice Baptist couple on their way home from choir practice. As I looked back, he gave me one more long wave. Then he dropped to all fours and bounded away like a deer, not a goat.

Sincerely yours,

Lady in Distress

Class of 1969

When Gina returned later that week to thank him for saving her she learned the Lake Worth Monster’s name was “Matt.” She offered him a plate of fresh chocolate chip cookies. Their first visit was interrupted by jeering onlookers from below the bluff. Matt rolled a tire in their general direction.

Matt was goatish, but the fishiness was an exaggeration. The lake smelled of dead fish in several places, so perhaps this accounted for the misperception. Gina kept a scrapbook of all the Lake Worth Monster articles and was thrilled to see her letter to the editor when it was

published. She cropped out the introduction, though she still remembered every word. They wrote that her “fictional account” had given the newsroom such a big laugh they felt they owed it to their readers to spread the mirth.

Inevitably, it was a star-crossed romance beset with challenges.

First, she didn’t own a car. Borrowing her father’s Oldsmobile required a complicated chain of deceit.

Second, Gina quickly realized she would not be getting any love poems from him. And, he immediately ate whatever notes she proffered.

Third, his taste in romantic gestures ran to gifts of prickly pear cactus fruit and bleated love songs.

Fourth, she was set to go to Bacone College in Muskogee, Oklahoma soon. While it was obvious to her that her cloven-footed boyfriend was no demon, she wondered if her love for him would survive four years of a Baptist education.

Still, she persevered. She was more comfortable when he wore clothes. She salvaged a torn pair of jeans from the laundromat and handily patched the ripped knee. She also gave him a shirt of her father’s, though it was much too large for Matt and missing several buttons. The blue set off Matt’s strange, electric azure eyes. She had to remind Matt to put the outfit on each time she came to see him.

As the summer drew to a close she became melancholy. They wouldn’t be exchanging letters. Their courtship had stalled. Their romance was based on little more than baked goods, unwanted gifts of clothing, and wordless gallantry.

The evening before she was to leave for college she borrowed her father’s car. She wanted to discuss their future one last time. Gina found Matt sitting on their log wearing his

jeans and button up shirt. From somewhere he had obtained a tie and wrapped it haphazardly around his throat. He absentmindedly chewed on its short end as she drove up.

She sat next to him and took his cloven hoof into her hands. She talked. He quickly became agitated and withdrew his foot. He cried a long mournful bleat, stood up, stepped out of the jeans and then dropped to all fours. His head swiveled back and forth as he struggled with the removal of the tie. Eventually the tie fell to the ground and he trampled on it while dragging the cuffs of the shirt over the rocky, sandy soil. Without ever looking back, he disappeared into the scrubby growth between the parkway and the lake.

There will be no salvaging that shirt, Gina thought, as she stood watching him disappear into the dark. She heard a splash and soon saw the moon glinting off his back as he swam towards Goat Island. Tears ran down her cheeks as the distance between them grew. Dating teenage boys had been more dangerous than she had expected, more dangerous than being courted by the Lake Worth Monster. In the end, long distance relationships are always hard.