

Plays for Young Audiences

A PARTNERSHIP OF SEATTLE CHILDREN'S THEATRE AND CHILDREN'S THEATRE COMPANY-MINNEAPOLIS

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The Monster Under the Bed

By
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The Monster Under the Bed was originally produced by Polka Theatre, UK, in 2009. With thanks to the Kennedy Center, Washington DC and the New Visions/New Voices festival, where play was first presented as a rehearsed reading, April 2008
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Characters.

BEN, a boy at junior school.

BEN'S DAD, a soldier.

MUM

VINCENT, Ben's best mate.

MONSTER, who lives under Ben's bed.

DAD MONSTER

MISS ROWLANDS, Ben's (and Vince's and Celine's) teacher

CELINE, a girl in Ben's class.

ANTHONY, the cleverest boy in the class.

DANNY, the coolest boy in class.

CELINE'S DOG

Part Sharing (could be):

1. (M) Ben
2. (M) Ben's Dad/Dad Monster
3. (F) Ben's Mum/Miss Rowlands/Celine
4. (M) Vince/Anthony/Danny/Celine's Dog
5. (M) Monster

The Two Back Stories:

1. Ben's dad gives him a pair of binoculars. They are a great gift. Dad is a soldier going away.

Yesterday: Ben takes them to school to show to his best mate, Vince. Vince loves them, takes them ... and doesn't give them back. The two boys have a big falling out.

Ben comes home, without the binoculars. Angry and upset, he takes it out on his mum. He goes to bed angry. His mum is angry, too.

2. The Monster and his Dad live under Ben's bed. During the day when Ben is at school, the Monster sneaks out and plays with Ben's toys. He sneaks down to the kitchen and steals food, and brings it back for his dad, who stays under the bed.

Set.

There is **underbed** and **overbed**.

On the boy's bed is where we start.

There is a point when the story goes underbed.

The play then has two strands, alternating between under and over – and sometimes the two worlds come together.

A bed, piled with bedclothes. An incomplete jig-saw, a few books are scattered around, a toy gun. The pile of clothes moves. A boy, in the bed, has troubled dreams.

Sounds of battle and war and helicopters.

His dad sweeps in.

BEN'S DAD: Here y'are, son.

He gives Ben a present. Ben unwraps it and finds a pair of binoculars.

BEN: Fantastic! Noculars.

He lifts them to his eyes, the wrong way round.

BEN'S DAD: Other end.

BEN: They're great. (Looking through them the right way)
They're all black.

BEN'S DAD: You've got to take the caps off. They protect the lenses.

BEN: It's all blurry. How do you work 'em?

BEN'S DAD: Close one eye and focus the other. Then turn the thing in the middle.

BEN: What can I see through them?

BEN'S DAD: Anything you want.

BEN: Anything?

Ben looks through. Ben's Dad looks back at him from the other end.

BEN'S DAD: Don't make trouble at school; don't let Vince, that mate of yours, be a pain in the butt; and look after your mum. OK? See you.

BEN: See you, Dad.

BEN'S DAD: Yeah.

Dad gives him a big hug.

BEN'S DAD: Love you, Corporal.

BEN: Love you, Sergeant.

Dad salutes – and Ben salutes back.

BEN'S DAD: Toodle-pip.

Ben's Dad picks up his bag and goes.

Vince, runs on and takes the binoculars.

BEN: Vince!

VINCE: A microscope!

BEN: Noculars, nugget!

VINCE: A periscope!

BEN: Noculars, div head.

VINCE: A stethoscope!

BEN: Vince, don't be a pain in the butt. Give them back!

VINCE: I'm only looking.

BEN: Just look then.

VINCE: Come on, I'm your best mate.

BEN: Give em back.

VINCE: (Smiling) O all right.

Vince puts them down. Ben relaxes. Vince snatches them back.

BEN: Vince!

And they fight, a huge fight, everything a boy could want in an adventure – Pirates, Ninjas and Wizards. Eventually... Vince is vanquished, completely dead.

BEN: Vince, you all right?

Then Vince rises like a zombie.

VINCE: I may be dead, Ben...

But I've still got the 'noculars.

Vince grabs the binoculars and runs off.

BEN: Vince! I've got to have 'em back, cos if I look through I can see... I'll get my dad!

VINCE: (Running back on) He isn't here, you maggot.

Vince goes.

Ben throws himself into bed. He dreams badly.

.....

The alarm clock goes off by the side of his bed, and he turns it off. It is morning. Mum comes in.

BEN: (Sleepily) I'm not a maggot.

MUM: Come on, sleepy. Up time.

BEN: Mu-uh...

MUM: School time.

BEN: Can't.

MUM: No such word.

BEN: Poorly.

MUM: Where?

BEN: Let's stay at home – on the sofa with a DVD.

MUM: We're short at work, I can't.

BEN: No such word.

MUM: Don't be cheeky. (Checking his forehead) You haven't got a temperature.

BEN: (Hoarse) Throat.

MUM: (Looking in) Looks all right.

BEN: Like stingers in it.

MUM: If there's a problem, Miss Rowlands will ring me and I'll sort something out.

BEN: My tongue's bad, feels green. (Shows his tongue)

MUM: It's pink. It's fine. Now shift.

He doesn't.

MUM: What's up?

BEN: The sky.

MUM: (Getting a bit fed up now) Out. Up. School.

BEN: Mum, my bed's been bulgy all night. Something digging in my back, hurting me. Bad dreams. There's something underneath.

MUM: (Getting his school clothes ready) Yeah, dust and rubbish; time we had a clean out.

BEN: Monsters or something, all night poking me.

MUM: I'll get the Hoover out tomorrow, suck them all up.

BEN: And I've lost my comfy. I had it when I went to bed. I think the monster stole it. The monster under the bed.

MUM: Ben, the only monster in this room is me. So tell me what cereal you want, or I'll grind your bones to make my-

BEN: That was a giant, not a monster, and I don't want any.

MUM: Mummy is under a lot of pressure. If she doesn't go to work, on time, she'll get the sack.

He sits there, not knowing what to do. Silence.

MUM: I've got work, you've got school. (Gives him his clothes) Dressed. Now. Then breakfast double quick. It's twenty to.

BEN: I don't-

MUM: But I do. So so do you, mate. (Looking everywhere) Where are your shoes? I'll find 'em. Get dressed.

She goes, searching for the shoes.

Ben, alone, very reluctantly puts on socks... but takes them off again and chucks them away.

MUM: (Entering, with shoes and a bowl of cereal) Your servant's arrived. Breakfast, Sir. (Sees he's not dressed) Ben! Get dressed, then get this down your neck or I'll... Sixty seconds that's all, then it's trouble, big trouble.

She goes.

Ben puts the spoon on the floor... and slaps his hand down on it so that it spins across the room. He laughs.

He gets it so he can do it again. He puts it down, sends it spinning again.

Laughs again.

He goes over to get it again...and an arm comes out from under the bed and steals his breakfast bowl. Ben sees it.

BEN: Oi!

He grabs the bowl and pulls. The arm under the bed pulls too.

BEN: Let go! Let go!
Let go of my...Aargh!

He is being dragged under the bed, he has to let go. The bowl disappears under the bed.

BEN: Give me my bowl back!

We hear munching and slurping and swallowing. The bowl is chucked out – it's empty. Then the spoon.

BEN: Where's my breakfast?

MONSTER: (Under the bed) Gone! Tummy!

BEN: Who are you?

MONSTER: (Under the bed) Hungry. I could eat a giraffe.

BEN: Don't you mean a horse?

MONSTER: (Under the bed) No morebiggerer than a horse.

BEN: Come out. Or I'll...

MONSTER: (Under the bed) Huffle and puffle and blow your house down.

BEN: You a wolf?

MONSTER howls like a wolf.

MONSTER: (Under the bed) No. Not wolf.

BEN: Who then?

Some snuffling, then... the Monster squeezes out, smiling. The Boy backs off.

BEN: (Pointing under his bed) You live..?

MONSTER: Me underbed. You overbed.

BEN: What are you?

MONSTER: You up on the bed, stories at night, they good. Then you snoring, that's bad, like an elepotomus. Last night, worse than ever, rolling, blubbing, outshouting...Now daytime: you go with your mum.

BEN: Not today.

MONSTER: Yes. Down the wooden hill you go, and I'll come out and play with your Lego and remoter control tank and Binonicle.
But I put them back. Same place. As if nothing has happened nothing has been.

BEN: You're a...

Monster nods.

That lives under my...

Monster nods.

BEN: I need comfy. (Searching on the bed) I hold it when I get... ever since I was a baby.

Monster goes back under and comes out with an old blanket. He gives it to Ben. Ben holds it close, sucks the corner.

BEN: Are you really..?

MONSTER: Underbed Monster. I eat...

BEN: Children.

MONSTER: No, jammy crusts you've dropped under kitchytable and squashygrapes that have rollied under the washy-sheen. Fings from the fridgillator when you've gone. I finish off the milky mushy bit you leave in your brecklefast bowly. But today I got whole bowlyful.

BEN: You ate my breakfast.

MONSTER: Yurghh, chocolate crispies in banana milk - too sweet and badreallybad for teeth. When you've gone I'll borrow your teethbrush.

BEN: Wha!?

MONSTER: No worries. I'll put it back before you find out.

BEN: You can't!

MONSTER: No such word says Mummything. And tell her I don't like new blue teethpaste, it's blimmin' horrible.

MUM: (Off) I'm coming. You ready?

MONSTER: Today Mummything more scary than Underbed Monster.

BEN: It's cos Dad's gone, she's, you know...

MONSTER: Shouty.

BEN: We're late.

MONSTER: Go. Today gonna do my jigsaw of Doctor Who.

BEN: MY jigsaw. And you can't, there's a piece missing, of the Dalek's eye. A 100 piece jigsaw with one piece missing. It's useless.

MONSTER: Wait there.

He crawls back under, then re-emerges with the piece.

MONSTER: Better than mine! My hundred piece jigsaw got ninety pieces missing.

He gives the piece to Ben.

BEN: It's the Dalek's eye.

MUM: (Off) Fifty-five.

MONSTER: Hurry up. Off you buzz.

Ben goes to go, but stops.

BEN: At school...

MONSTER: Problemo?

BEN: Big problemo.

MUM (Off): Fifty-six.

BEN: Vince.

MONSTER: You outshouting that word all night.

BEN: Yeah.

MONSTER: What is a 'Vince'?

MUM (Off): Fifty-seven.

BEN: My best mate. Was. He's stole my noculars and won't give 'em back and today's the last day of term so I've got to get 'em back.
He was in my dreams.

MONSTER: Vince...bigger than me?

BEN: No.

MONSTER: *Little* problemo then.

MUM: (Off): Fifty-eight. Coming ready or not.

MONSTER: (Having an idea) Ping! You do jigsaw, and I'll go. Get noculars, eat Vince. Turn Vince into mince. (Sings) Me no afraid of the Big Bad Vince, Big Bad Vince.

MUM: Fifty-nine.

BEN: Miss Rowlands'll stick you in the naughty corner.

MUM: Fifty-nine and a half.

MONSTER: (Getting dressed in Ben's clothes) Bad people should be eaten – that's what my dad says. And when Vince in my belly I'll sing 'Hey ho the wicked Vince is dead'.

They smile. The Monster has put on Ben's school jumper and glasses.

MUM: (Off) Fifty-nine and three-quarters..!

She comes in, now in her work clothes, and grabs Monster.

MUM: Right. Work for me. Miss Rowlands for you.

She gives Ben's school bag and lunch box to Monster and shoves an apple in his mouth.

What have you got to say for yourself now?

He tries to talk, but has a mouth full of banana. He is bundled off.

MONSTER (Off): Wait. I've forgotten something.

Monster rushes back in.

MONSTER: My dad. Poorly is. Got long face, hungerling. He...

MUM (Off): Come on!

MONSTER: And... (Apprehensive) I've never been school before. I've never been out of house before... Outside, is it..? I'm feeling a bit...

BEN: Call Miss Rowlands 'Miss'; remember to put your hand up before you speak; and join in everyone else's games.

MONSTER: Okey dokey. Me go amigo. (He salutes, Ben salutes back. They touch knuckles, smile)

MUM: (Re-entering, no patience left) Ben! Come on!

Mum drags Monster out.

Ben is alone. He thinks about Dad Monster. He listens. He gets a torch and shines it under the bed.

BEN: Nothing.

He smiles, then goes to go.

BEN: Brecklefast. From the fridgillator.

He smiles as if it's all been a joke, then a huge voice booms out from under the bed.

DAD MONSTER (Under the bed): About blimmin' time!

Ben stops, motionless. It's his worst fear – there *is* a big scary monster under the bed.

DAD MONSTER (Under the bed): I'm starveling. Get some grub from the fridgilator. And get a move on.

Ben does not move.

DAD MONSTER (Under the bed): Go on!

BEN: (In the monster's voice) OK... .. Dad.

He slowly tip-toes across the carpet to the door. He has nearly escaped when the Monster's arm shoots out and grabs him by the leg.

DAD MONSTER (Under the bed): I not your dad. And you not my son.
What you done with him? You eaten him?

BEN: No, no, he's my friend.

DAD MONSTER (Under the bed): He's a monster, he has no friends.
Monsters don't have friends. You've eaten him for brecklefast haven't you, ground up his bones to make your bread?

BEN: No! No! He ate my breakfast and now he's gone to school.

DAD MONSTER (Under the bed): Fibber!

BEN: My mum gave him an apple.

DAD MONSTER (Under the bed): Fibber, fibber.

BEN: And he's wearing my glasses.

DAD MONSTER (Under the bed): Fibber, fibber, fibber!

BEN: He's gone to eat Vince.

DAD MONSTER (Under the bed): And who are you?

BEN: Ben. Ben. Overbed Ben.

DAD MONSTER (Under the bed): Funny name, Ben Ben Overbed Ben.

BEN: Let go!

Ben is being dragged under the bed. He screams.

BEN: What do you want?

DAD MONSTER (Under the bed): (In a huge voice) I'm hungry..!

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Outside the house, Mum hurriedly leads Monster to school.

MUM: Down the path

MONSTER: Wow!

MUM: Through the gate.

MONSTER: A gate! Wow! A gate, a gatey-gate gate. There's an incy wincy on the hedge! (He takes the spider, very carefully) Eight legs! Just like in Ben's book!

He eats it.

MUM: Ben! Close the gate!

MONSTER: Close the gate!

MUM: Along the road.

MONSTER: Along the road!

MUM: What are you doing?

MONSTER: Looking for more spiders.

MUM: Pick your feet up.

He holds his feet and picks them up, and falls over.

MUM: Ben!

Mum pulls him along.

MONSTER: I've never been out before. Dad won't even let me look out the window in case someone sees me. This is just-

MUM: Come on, Ben, faster.

MONSTER: Blue car, red car, silver car, bus, fat bloke on bike going to work, police car, aeroplane wowww! And there's a-

MUM: Past the shop

MONSTER: It's a shop! I can smell chocolate and newspapers.

He goes to go in, but she yanks his arm and he trails after her.

MUM: Round the corner.

MONSTER: Hold on, I can't see any corners. Corners are kept in the fridgilator. You take off the silvery lid and lick it and the pot is a creamy white square with a triangle of sticky. My favourite is black cherry.

MUM: Round the corner.

MONSTER: If this is a corner where's the triangle of sticky?

He stands in something.

MONSTER: Urgh. I hate dogs.

MUM: Along the road.

MONSTER: I love roads. They're so, so... .. roady!

MUM: Past the garages.

MONSTER: Broom, broom!

MUM: Past the dog.

A dog appears, yapping at Monster

MONSTER: Hello dog. Think you're a wolf don't ya?! Big teeth, all the better for eatling me with.

MUM: Ben, don't touch.

She drags Ben away. He drops his bag on purpose.

MONSTER: Hold on, Mum, dropped bag. I'll catchle you up.

He goes back to get his bag. The dog is barking like mad. He eats the dog. Dead quiet. Mum comes back for Ben, looks at him, feels that something is wrong, but can't work it out. Ben pulls the red dog collar from his mouth – all that remains of the dog – and throws it away.

MONSTER: Coming, Mummy...

MUM: If I'm late for work, Ben

They stand at the kerb.

MUM: Say hello to the lollipop lady.

MONSTER: Hello lollipop lady, can I eat your lollipop?

MUM: (Tugging him on) Green man.

MONSTER: Beep. Beep, Beep, Beep. I'm gonna see Vince.

MUM: Here we are. At last. School.

He looks up. His face changes

MONSTER: So big. And the likkul children, their mums and dads leaving 'em, dumpling them. Good job I've got my mum.

MUM: Right, Ben, see you tonight. Celine's Mum will bring you home, she's got a key, and she'll wait with you at our house till I get back. OK? Hell, look at the time.

She goes.

MONSTER: Mum? Mum? (He calls out; there is an echo on his voice) Hello...?

Silence.

I didn't even get a kiss.

A child in the same uniform as Monster run past pretending to be an aeroplane. Monster watches the child go, thinks, then puts out his arms, becomes an aeroplane and runs after them.

.....

We go back to Ben's bedroom – to see him being slowly pulled under the bed.

DAD MONSTER: I'm hungry!

BEN: Help! Help! Mum! Help!

The set transforms and... we see under the bed for the first time.

Ben sits there, very scared, under the bed, still, in the silence. He can't see Dad Monster.

BEN: Hello.

No reply.

BEN: Hello.

No reply.

BEN: Anybody here?
Monster?
Miss Rowlands says it's good to have an imagination.
That's a lie. If I didn't have an imagination I wouldn't be
imagining this.
Would I, monster? Monster you there? (No reply)
Monster ponster? Monster Ponster Tonster? No such
thing.
(He goes to go) See you later.

DAD MONSTER (Unseen): Alligator.

BEN: Who said that?

DAD MONSTER (Unseen): Tic toc tic toc...
Tic toc tic toc...

BEN: Is that You, Mum? I'm ready to go to school now,
Mum.

DAD MONSTER (Unseen): Tic toc tic toc says the alligator, the hungry
alligator.

BEN: Actually, It was a crocodile that went-

DAD MONSTER (Unseen): Tickety-tock. Snappety-snap.
You stole my son; I want him back.

The odds and ends, bits and bobs of discarded childhood, start to move and Dad Monster appears. He is covered with things that have been stored and dumped under the bed. They are accreted on him, part of him. He is dusty,

grey.

DAD MONSTER: Fiddly-fum, fiddley foy
I Smell the blood of overbed boy.

BEN: Run, run, as fast as you can
You can't catch me, I'm the fastest runner in my school
apart from Vince, and he doesn't count.

Ben turns to run.

DAD MONSTER: And I'm the fastest runner under this bed.

Ben runs. Dad monster chases him. Ben dives behind some of the rubbish under the bed. Dad Monster runs in after him.

.....

At school. Monster is still running like an aeroplane.

MISS ROWLANDS: Ben! Get back here now!

MONSTER: Are you Vince?

MISS ROWLANDS: Do I look like Vince?

MONSTER: Er, no... Miss? Sorry, Miss. I er er had something in
my eye, Miss, and couldn't see properly.

MISS ROWLANDS: But it wasn't stopping you running in the corridor was
it?

MONSTER: No Miss.

MISS ROWLANDS: And what happens, Ben, to people who run in the
corridor?

Monster thinks.

MONSTER: They get eaten, Miss?

MISS ROWLANDS: Are you being cheeky, Ben?

MONSTER: No Miss.

MISS ROWLANDS: Because if you are you won't be taking the class goldfish home tonight and looking after them for the holidays.

MONSTER: No, Miss, it's just what my dad says, Miss.

MISS ROWLANDS: Ben, about your dad... We're all thinking of him, you know that.

MONSTER: Yes, Miss.

MISS ROWLANDS: I want you to go back to class now – without running.

MONSTER: Yes, Miss.

MISS ROWLANDS: Because we've dance first lesson. That will be good, won't it?

MONSTER: Yes miss. ... Will Vince be there, Miss?

MISS ROWLANDS: No, he's at the doctor's; he'll be in later. Ben. (Looking at him closely) There's something odd about you today, but I can't quite work out -

MONSTER: I'll be off then, Miss.

He runs off. Miss Rowlands watches him go, then exits.

.....

Ben is hiding. Dad Monster is searching for him.

DAD MONSTER: Come out, come out wherever you are. I know you're in here. By the broken hot-Wheels? (He slings it aside) No. Behind the football game with no football? (He moves it aside) No.

Behind the thing that Aunty Wendy bought you? No.
(He looks at it, tries to puzzle out what it is, chucks it
aside)

Ben makes a break for it... but is caught.

DAD MONSTER: Gotcha!

BEN: Let me go!

DAD MONSTER: Graaaaaaargh!

BEN: Help!!

DAD MONSTER: No-one can hear you. Mumthing gone and not thinking
of you. I got teeth more sharpy than a normous
crocodile; am more scary than heffalumps and
woozles; am more Gruff than the Gruffalo. You stole
my son; I eat you. Fair swapsies. Graaargh!

Dad Monster shoves his wrist in front of Ben.

DAD MONSTER: What time is it?

BEN: Can't you tell the time?

DAD MONSTER: My boy does the time-telling.

BEN: The little hand's just after nine and the big hand... it
hasn't got a big hand.

DAD MONSTER: I know, there's only junkly stuff under here.

BEN: It's between nine and ten.

DAD MONSTER: Brecklefast time.

BEN: Please don't eat me.

DAD MONSTER: Now's the time my son goes out there and gets
brecklefast from the fridgilator and brings it here and
we have a picklenick. I am big hungry.

He looks at the boy, licking his lips.

BEN: Mum bought some big fat sausages.

DAD MONSTER: I love big fat sausages. They are so... .. big fat sausagey.

BEN: I'll go get them.

DAD MONSTER: Wait! Your dad went out there and now he's gone. My boy went out there and now he's gone. Gone means not coming back.

BEN: My dad is coming back.

DAD MONSTER: Then why your mum do crying at night? You stay here, till my boy gets back.

BEN: Come to the kitchen with me then.

DAD MONSTER: Me underbed monster. Underbed means under the bed. I staying here. And so are you.

Pause.

BEN: If I go to the kitchen, to the fridge-

DAD MONSTER: The what?

BEN: The fridgillator. And get some nice cold milk and some cereal, and some bacon and some marmalade and toast and butter and yoghurt and... what else do you like?

DAD MONSTER: You trying trick me?

BEN: Then I could bring them back and we could have a picklenick brecklefast. And wait for your son to come back.

DAD MONSTER: You must think I'm stoopid. If I let you go, you'll be Dick-Whittington-off-to-London and never come back.

BEN: I'm only going to the kitchen.

DAD MONSTER: Or Paddlington Bear back to darkest Peru.

BEN: He came *from* Peru. He didn't go *to*-

DAD MONSTER: I'm not talking.

Pause.

BEN: My mum says that I get grumpy when I'm hungry.

DAD MONSTER: (Grumpily) I am not grumpy.

BEN: Shall we do a jigsaw? I've got the Dalek's eye.

DAD MONSTER: Too hungry.

BEN: Or send Mr Slinky down the stairs?

DAD MONSTER: Too hungry.

BEN: Or do Lego?

DAD MONSTER: Too hungry. Three hungry. Four hungry!!
(Has an idea) Ping! (Grabbing a rope) Do you know what this is?

BEN: It's the special string Dad used to pull me along with on my scooter.

DAD MONSTER: What's this?

BEN: My old skipping rope. Celine, my friend, she can do double jumps and crossed arms and everything. I wish she was here now.

DAD MONSTER: You are trapped under bed by a monster who's gonna eat you. Not time to be thinking of girls. Tie 'em on Mr Slinky... And now tie it round your leggy leg leg.

BEN: That's my arm.

DAD MONSTER: I know. And what you're gonna do is go out there... down the apple and pairs...down the wooden hill, and get some food.

BEN: How do you know I won't untie it and run off?

DAD MONSTER: 'Cos it's a monster knot. Only undone by monsters. You could try, but you'd be trying till forever.

BEN: Celine's mum gave me a book of knots for Christmas.

DAD MONSTER: But you never read it, you chucked it under your bed with rest of rubbish and forgottled it. I'm particularly fond of marmalamalade. And pickle. Cos you need pickle to have a picklenick, don't ya?
Now, skiddadle. And quick.

He starts to go.

Bye.

DAD MONSTER: Toodle-pip.

Ben scrambles out and runs off.
But Dad Monster tugs the rope just to show him who's the boss, and Ben falls over.

DAD MONSTER: An' hurry up!

Dad Monster smiles. Then lets out some more rope.

Ben goes.

Dad Monster peers out, uncertain...

.....

School. Monster is holding the goldfish bowl, and trying to catch the fish.

MISS ROWLANDS: (Voice from off) Right, it's Dance time. Ben, put Moby and Willy back in the fish corner please and find a partner.

Monster realises he's been caught doing something he shouldn't be doing; rushes to put the fish back; then grabs a dance partner - Anthony.

MONSTER: Are you Vince?

ANTHONY: You're weird today, Ben, you've got a funny look in your eye and you smell sort of dusty, like my grandma.

MONSTER: Who are you then?

ANTHONY: Anthony, stupid.

MONSTER: Funny name, Anthony Stupid.

ANTHONY: Do you know the difference between a weasel and a stoat?

MONSTER: Erm...

ANTHONY: A weasel is weazily recognised and a stoat is stoatily different.

MONSTER: Do you know that the incy-wincy on my hedge this morning tasted like a raisin? A raisin with legs?

Anthony takes off Monster's glasses and looks at him very closely.

ANTHONY: If I didn't know better...

Monster snatches back the specs and puts them back on. He blows at Anthony, who is hurricaned away and lands somewhere with a crash. Monster acts innocent.

Enter Celine.

CELINE: What's up with Ant-hole?

Monster shrugs.

MONSTER: Are you Vince?

CELINE: Course not, silly.

MONSTER: Where's Vince?

CELINE: He's at the doctor's, having his verruccas burnt off.

MONSTER: He'll be in later?

CELINE: Yeah.

MONSTER: Good.

He thinks about what he's going to do later.

CELINE: Are you thinking about Vince? Or how lucky you are to have me as your dance partner?

MONSTER: Yeah.

CELINE: Do you still love me?

MONSTER: Pardon?

CELINE: Do you still love me?

MONSTER: I'm not deaf. Just surprised by the question.

CELINE: Because you did yesterday, when you asked me to marry you.

MONSTER: Did I? Ben didn't tell me anything about this.

CELINE: You having a laugh? You trying to get out of it? Boys have pretended to have total memory loss or terrible diseases to avoid going out with me in the past. Michael Flatnose said he had the plague.

MONSTER: Why's he called Michael Flatnose?

CELINE: Cos I flattened his nose. (Gesturing to take off the ring) You saying the engagement's off?

MONSTER: No.

CELINE: You're not going to break my heart are you?

MONSTER: No, no.

CELINE: (She smiles lovingly at him, and stands very close) I told my mum that you were nice. And I told her you liked animals.

MONSTER: I do - specially dogs and spiders.

CELINE: And I told her we're getting married in a church.

MONSTER: O.

CELINE: You cool with that?

MONSTER: Yeah. What's a church?

CELINE: (She laughs) An' I told her you had a sense of humour. And I told her we'll have a big cake.

MONSTER: I like cake. How big's it gonna be?

CELINE: Big as you want, darling. You look different today Ben darling. And you hung your bag on the wrong peg and you went in the wrong toilets and you sat in the wrong desk. You still love me don't you?

MONSTER: Course.

CELINE: And always will?

Monster nods.

CELINE: And you'll marry me?

Monster nods.

CELINE: And we'll have lots of babies?

Monster isn't so sure about the babies.

CELINE: To have and to hold, honour and obey, for richer and poorer, for ever and ever Amen?

Monster nods.

MONSTER: Just one thing: what's your name?

She raises her hand to whack him, but is interrupted by:

MISS ROWLANDS: (Voice from off) Right everyone. I want you to move to the music. Beautifully, gracefully, like leaves on a tree in a spring breeze.

Music comes on. Monster throws himself around like a mad thing – a mixture of every dance he might have seen, but also like a tree. Celine tries to dance with him, but it is impossible. She wails with despair. Monster stops, pleased with himself, unsure why Celine isn't quite so happy.

CELINE: That's it, Ben, the wedding is off.

She goes.

MONSTER: (Calling after her) Excuse me, excuse ... Can we still have the cake?

He goes after her.

.....

Underbed. Dad Monster holds the rope which leads out from under the bed and out of sight.

DAD MONSTER: (Shouting) You still there?

BEN (Off): Yes.

DAD MONSTER: Found any food?

BEN (Off): Yes.

DAD MONSTER: Anything nice?

BEN (Off): Yes.

DAD MONSTER: Come on back then.

BEN (Off): No.

Dad Monster starts to haul in the rope.

DAD MONSTER: Get back here.

Dad Monster pulls and pulls... and tied on to the end of it is a sauce pan.

BEN: (Entering, holding a pair of scissors) I might not be able to untie a monster knot, but I can cut a bit of old string.

Dad Monster hauls it in; he is furious. He smashes the chair to bits. He eats one of the legs.

DAD MONSTER: I'll huffle and I'll puffle and I'll smashle your face in!

Ben stays at a safe distance.

BEN: Come and get me then.

DAD MONSTER: I will.

BEN: Come on then.

DAD MONSTER: I will I will.

BEN: Come on then, come on then.

DAD MONSTER: I will I will I will. My teeth are sharp, I'm a monster that eats children I'm... I'm...

BEN: Afraid to come out. That's why you wouldn't come with me to the fridgillator. Your boy comes out and he gets you food and brings it back but now he's gone. Escaped. Forever. Never not ever coming back. And I don't blame him.

DAD MONSTER: Waaaargh waaaaargh!

BEN: You are a bully. You are pathetic!

He puts the tray down and drags on the Hoover. He switches it on.

BEN: Come on Monster, and I'll suck you up. That's what happens to rubbish under beds.

Dad Monster will not venture out and howls with despair.

DAD MONSTER: Feed me.

BEN: Come and get it.

DAD MONSTER: I'm starveling. Sauce pan not so good as marmalarmalade.
Hungerly thirsterly.

He howls and moans, and is in despair. Ben turns the Hoover off and goes. Dad Monster is like a bereft animal in cage.

Mirror mirror on the wall

Who's the hungerliest of them all.
Incy wincy spider
Climbing up the spout
Down comes the rain. I wont go out I wont go out.

Dad Monster rocks and rocks.

Ben comes back and looks at him.

DAD MONSTER: Please.

BEN: Throw the rope.

DAD MONSTER: Too weak. Poorly. Thirsty.

BEN: Bet you want to drink my blood don't you?

DAD MONSTER: No, orange juice - the one with the bits is best.

BEN: Throw the rope then. Throw the rope.

Dad Monster lobs the rope out to Ben. Ben ties the rope to the food tray.

BEN: Pull.

Dad Monster hauls it in, then eats it.

DAD MONSTER: (As he eats) When he brings me brecklefast, we eat, and then he plays on your carpet. One day he used your bow, and shot an arrow and stuck it in the ceiling. He had to fill the hole with chewed up toast and spit. Mmm, good picklenick this.

BEN: My dad and me used to have picnics – picklenicks – on top of mountains.

DAD MONSTER: You've been top of a mountling?!

BEN: In Scotland. We went up Ben Nevis, it was enormous, a whole day high. Dad took a flask and some squashed sandwiches in his rucksack.

DAD MONSTER: Hold on!

He scrabbles in the debris and finds a rucksack – and the flask is in it

BEN: It's Dad's!
 Throw the rope.

Dad Monster throws the rope out again. Ben grabs it. He pretends to be scaling the mountain, as he crosses from the corner of his bedroom to the bed. Monster puts on the rucksack.

BEN: It's a cold, cold wintry day. We're on the mountain,
 climbing. It's rocky, steep, and snow.

DAD MONSTER: Slippery then.

Ben is pretending to climb, he slips.

DAD MONSTER: Be careful!

BEN: Freezing. My fingers are tingly, can't feel them. Like
 ice. You are at the top holding the rope.

DAD MONSTER: I've got it.

BEN: My fingers are numb.

DAD MONSTER: The wildy windy wind is whistling.

He makes the sound of the wind.

BEN: This ledge is too narrow. I can't balance.

DAD MONSTER: Don't look down.

BEN: Too narrow. I'm falling. Help!

DAD MONSTER: Hold on!

BEN: I can't. I'm aaaaaaaaaaargh!

Ben lets go of the rope and falls; he falls to the corner of his bedroom and slumps on the carpet.

DAD MONSTER: You all right?

BEN: Muurghhh.

DAD MONSTER: Catch the rope. Catch it, boy.

Dad Monster throws the rope. On the third attempt, Ben catches it.

DAD MONSTER: Tie the rope round your waist.

He does.

DAD MONSTER: Gripple it. I've got you. It's starting to snow.

He throws some polystyrene bits.

BEN: Pull.

DAD MONSTER: Pull.

BEN: The knot is slipping.

DAD MONSTER: Hold on, Ben.

BEN: I can't.

DAD MONSTER: No such word.

The boy scales the bedroom floor, with the wind blowing and the snow falling, until he is stretching his hand out to the outstretched hand of Dad Monster.

BEN: Reach, reach.

DAD MONSTER: And by his fingertips he got him.
And pulled him, pulled him, to the top of the mountling.
Safe. Safe as custard.

Ben arrives at the top of the mountain under the bed. Dad Monster holds him.

BEN: When we get to the top, we have the squashed sandwiches and the tea, then we look at the view with dad's noculars and try and see the sea.

BEN makes pretend binoculars with his hands and looks out at the imaginary far-off horizon.

DAD MONSTER: The sea, the sea. I've never seen the sea.

BEN: Look. It's over there. See.

BEN: It's beautiful – here you look.

He puts his hand-made 'noculars in front of Dad Monster's eyes.

BEN: Is it all glistening? Are there sailing ships? And dolphins? What colour is it?

DAD MONSTER: It's dark, blurry, like fog.
Can't see anything.

Game over. Dad Monster rummages in a corner under the bed.

DAD MONSTER: He's not back. He's flown the nest.

BEN: He's not a bird.

DAD MONSTER: I mean it. If he doesn't come back, big monster under bed eats little boy all up, end of story.

He roars – an enormous roar that echoes down the whole street. He then disappears into the rubbish under the bed.

Ben watches him go, then picks up the flask. He takes the top off the flask and pours a cup of pretend tea. He imagines he is with his dad, having tea on top of the mountain.

.....

Back in school Monster is sitting, fed up after a difficult morning. Enter Miss Rowlands.

MONSTER: Is Vince here yet, Miss?

MISS ROWLANDS: Ben, about dance...

MONSTER: Sorry Miss.
And for what happened in maths lesson, too, stickling compasses in the ceiling.

MISS ROWLANDS: It's all right.

MONSTER: And in science. I didn't mean the explosion. Sorry.

MISS ROWLANDS: It's all right.

MONSTER: I'll take money from Ben's piggly bank to pay for the new door.

MISS ROWLANDS: Ben... you are different today, aren't you?

MONSTER: Am I?

MISS ROWLANDS: And I know why you are different today.

MONSTER: Do you?

MISS ROWLANDS: Yes. Me teacher. Me know everything.

MONSTER: O dear.

MISS ROWLANDS: Sometimes big things happen in our lives, don't they?

MONSTER: Yes, Miss

MISS ROWLANDS: Like what's happened to you?

MONSTER: Yes, Miss.

MISS ROWLANDS: And everything changes doesn't it?

MONSTER: Yes, Miss.

MISS ROWLANDS: It's like the little boy we all knew yesterday has gone, and today we've got a different boy, haven't we?

Monster opens his mouth, but can't say any more.

MISS ROWLANDS: So do you know what I'm going to do?

MONSTER: Eat me, Miss.

MISS ROWLANDS: (She puts an arm round him) We're all thinking about your dad, and I know it has a big effect on you.

MONSTER: He hasn't got me to go get his breakfast has he? Or tell the time for him. I worry about him. Without me, he'll be grumpy.

MISS ROWLANDS: You're a good boy, Ben. And I know the worry your Mum must be feeling.

MONSTER: My Mum?

MISS ROWLANDS: With your dad away being a soldier and her not knowing when he'll be back on leave.

MONSTER: Oh...Oh. Oh! That Dad, away dad.

MISS ROWLANDS: Do you have another dad?

MONSTER: No, I thought you meant... erm. I'm very tired.

He pretends to be asleep, standing up.

MISS ROWLANDS: So, it's good, that you and Vince are best friends, isn't it? So I'm going to change the seating arrangements at lunch so you and Vince can sit together. Your best friend's not back yet, but you'll have him for lunch.

MONSTER: Have him for lunch. Great idea, Miss.

MISS ROWLANDS: See you later. Keep out of trouble.

She goes. He is content. He moves his arms like the jaws of a crocodile.

MONSTER: Have him for lunch. Snap, snap! I am the crockledile circling round the boat; round and round, round and round, going to eat his throat. And I am Captain Hook and I'll make him walk the plank, right to the very end and when he falls off I'll be the crockledile again underneath in the water with my jaws open wide and he'll fall in and I'll grindle his bones and sing ding dong the wicked Vince is bread! He is the joker and I am batman; he is Darth Vader and I am gonna zap him with my light sabre.

Celine comes on at great speed, throws herself at him and sits on him.

CELINE: I forgive you. For dancing like a muppet. It is one of the things about you that I love. Unpredictable. And unpredictable is cute.

MONSTER: Cute?

CELINE: And cute is the stage in a relationship before staring into someone's eyes.

She stares into his eyes.

CELINE: And staring into someone's eyes is the stage in a relationship before kissing...

MONSTER: (She goes to kiss him. He effortlessly lifts her off) Celine. This is a new thing for me.

He climbs up the wall and hangs from the ceiling.

CELINE: Yeah, that's what I like...Unpredictable.

Monster sings. It is an old, long-forgotten Underbed Monster song.

CELINE: Ben. You are better than chocolate spread, better than brown sauce on baked beans, better than everything.

She joins in the singing.

Underbed Ben continues drinking tea and imagining. Dad monster comes out of hiding, seems to hear the song his boy is singing, hangs upside down and sings, too. We hear three voices in two spaces, in harmony.

At school, after a while, enter Anthony – on crutches with his arm in a sling.

ANTHONY: Ben! Get down or I'll tell Miss Rowlands.

Celine squares up to him.

CELINE: Tell her what, Ant-hole?

ANTHONY: One, that he's hanging off the ceiling; and, two, that he's not normal; in fact, if you look at him closely, very closely – in fact I'm surprised no-one's noticed - you can clearly see that he's-

CELINE: What? What! That he's gorgeous? That he loves me, and I loves him and that we are going to get married, in a church,

MONSTER: And have a very big cake

DAD MONSTER: I don't want him to be enjoyling himself.
BEN: Well maybe he's not enjoyling himself.
DAD MONSTER: I don't want him to be not enjoyling himself.
But they are both worried.

.....

A boy, Danny is standing in the lunch queue

Enter Monster.

MONSTER: Are you Vince?
DANNY: Doh.
MONSTER: What you standling here for?
DANNY: Lunch, no-brain.

Monster stands in front of Danny.

DANNY: And this is the queue, man, and I'm at the front, so you're second.

Monster thinks about mangling him or eating him, but decides not to and goes behind.

MONSTER: Funny things schools. The rules are so different to under the bed.
DANNY: What's your problem, man?
MONSTER: Nothing. I'm cool man, cool as a fridgillator.
DANNY: (Laughs) You know, dood, that was the best maths lesson ever. How can anyone not know two add two? 'I've forgot Miss Rowlands.'
'Ben how many sides on a triangle?'
'I've forgot, Miss Rowlands.' (He laughs)

Enter Celine.

CELINE: Danny, you laughing at my boyf?

DANNY: No, I was just saying how dead funny Ben's been today. I loved it when at milk time he drank twelve cartons of milk, and then ate the cartons (He rolls about laughing) And I loved how he sharpened everyone's pencils - with his teeth.

CELINE: Glad you're not laughing. Danny. Danny, Not The Champion of the World.

She looks at Danny. He understands.

DANNY: Cool. Want to go in front of me in the queue, Ben?

MONSTER likes this. He stands at the front. And Celine then stands in front of him.

CELINE: Do you wanna know why I did that Ben darling?

MONSTER: Yeah.

CELINE: Cos we are an item. We are one. So laughing at you is laughing at me.
Just one question, Ben darling. In maths, and a million other times today why are you being such a stupid plank?

MONSTER: Celine... darling... when's Vince getting here? Miss said he'd be here for lunch. And I'm hungerling.

CELINE: What is it with you and him? You're not a kid anymore, Ben.

MONSTER: Just want the noculars back.

DANNY: They yours? I saw Vince with 'em last night. He was on top of the old garages.

Monster starts to get agitated.

DANNY: He told me they were from the war and your dad captured 'em in a well big battle or something. And your dad gave 'em to you, and you gave 'em to Vince. He said summat about selling 'em on e-bay.

MONSTER: I will eat him. I will eat him!

Monster is not happy. Lunch bell. Music. Non-word scene: They go in to lunch. They get lunch. They start eating. Monster is still fuming. He eats his lunch, wildly and messily, and then he eats everyone else's. He loses control, there is smashing of plates and furniture being pushed over and everything. It finishes with Celine smashing a plate over Monster's head. He falls to the floor, knocked out.

.....

DAD MONSTER: (Pushing a box out from under the bed) I found this.

BEN: My soldiers! I was wondering where they went.

DAD MONSTER: Your mum shovled them under here, one night when you was asleep. I thought she was a burgular, only she crept in and gave you kissings on your cheek and then slid 'em under. Hit me on the nose.

BEN: You have to stand 'em up so they can see the enemy. Every one has another one covering them. (He stands them all up)
Then the enemy comes. With their snipers and secret weapons.

He makes one soldier shoot another.

BEN: Gotcha!!

DAD MONSTER: Like your dad. Doing the shooting I mean, not the falling off.

BEN: Yeah.

DAD MONSTER: Excitling being your dad, going out there.

BEN: But he says not as exciting as going with me and Mum to Alton Towers. Or going fishing in a boat when we're on holiday.

He puts the soldiers carefully back in the box.

BEN: He told me if I look through the noculars...

DAD MONSTER: What noculars?

BEN: The ones Luke's gone on a mission to get. If I look through them I might be able to see him, see that he's alright.

DAD MONSTER: (Looking through the stuff under the bed) I've got two toilet roll tubes in here somewhere. Hold on, hold on, yeah here they are, put them to your eyes, see if they work, go on. See if you can see him.

BEN: Don't be stupid, he's thousands of miles away in the desert.

.....

Back at school. Celine has tied Monster boy up.

CELINE: What's up with you? You won't be able to just go off on one when we are married you know, or my mum'll sort you out. So you just sit there and chill and I'll keep massaging your neck, that's what my mum does to Uncle Ronnie when he's had a bad day and he's shouting at the fridge.

Is this a hormone thing? Growing up stuff? My mum says that growing up can be hard. Girls get boobies and things and need to buy lots and lots of shoes she says, and boys... well they grunt.

MONSTER: Urgh.

CELINE: And they get very smelly. Worse than dogs. Did I tell you my dog ran away this morning, weird, cos he's never done it before. Anyway, is that what all this is

about? You gonna go off Lego and start smoking, then down the pub like Uncle Ronnie? I don't want any of that stuff, Ben. Do you copy? I know I said I liked unpredictable, but eating 26 dinners is something else. Well? Well?

MONSTER: Er...

CELINE: Or is all this cos of your dad?

MONSTER thinks of his Dad.

Ben, whatever. I'll always love you and look after you, babe.

She sits down with him, his friend. They smile.

Enter Vince. He is walking very gingerly.

VINCE: Alright Celine? Alright Ben? You OK?

CELINE: What's up with you?

VINCE: Me verruccas. The doctor zapped them. It was like red hot needles, only freezin' cold.

CELINE: Good though, you won't have to wear those mank rubber socks in PE.

VINCE: He said all it would do was tickle, and it was like lasers from outer space, or getting a screwdriver and digging it in.

CELINE: Did you cry?

VINCE: No way. Well a bit – but only cos of the smell. And now I walk like flippin' Frankenstein.

CELINE: You all right now?

VINCE: Yeah. Have I missed lunch? You all right Ben? Ben?

MONSTER: Are you Vince?

CELINE: Good job you're here, Vince. Ben ain't half been waitin' for you.

Monster breaks from the skipping ropes that Celine tied him up with, takes off his glasses and the bits of Ben's school uniform. And there is thunder and smoke and lightning, and he transforms, doubling in size, and he roars and is very scary. He moves to get Vince.

Blackout.

Interval.