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"Come on Mabel, let's go play!" Mabel groaned, her little brother Max tugging on her sleeve. The pair were standing on the edge of the forest near their family home in Scotland. Mabel was 10, whilst Max was only 7. "I wanna explore the deep, dark forest and fight off all the monsters!" he declared, waving around a stick, brandishing it as if it were a sword. "Alright Max," Mabel said. "Let's go see the monsters." Forest exploring was a bit of a hobby for the pair. Mabel was a shy girl, with not that many friends at school, so on weekends like these, she liked to join her brother on his make-believe "quests" into the woods. Max was her best friend, a little brother that she'd loved ever since he was born, and she adored his outgoing personality. Sometimes, they could stay for hours on end, hidden among the trees. Luckily, the forest itself was quite safe, a fact which their poor mother Lucy trusted. She knew how much Mabel loved her brother and knew that she would never let anything bad happen to him, but sometimes she worried about them both, on days where they didn't return for many hours. Her husband, Sam, had died two years ago in a terrible car accident. They all missed him a lot, and sometimes it was a struggle raising them both alone, but she managed.

Max ran out ahead, dodging trees and sticks as he ran. Mabel followed behind, kicking along a rock. She felt that it was a bit hot in the forest, so she unzipped her jacket and took off her hood. She loved the forest, something about the sounds of the birds, the beautiful old trees and the smell really resonated with her. It was a special place to her, somewhere that she and Max could escape from the rest of the world and go on adventures. She knew that Max loved it here too, running among the wildlife. She always followed along with his little quests, because she loved how much joy it gave him. He made her laugh, all his talk of monsters in such a sleepy town as this one. They had never really found much on their adventures, other than a few stray animals. Little did she know that today they would find something that was a fair bit bigger than a squirrel or a deer. A lot more dangerous too. This was a day that Mabel would remember for the rest of her life.

Mabel was resting against a tree. They had been in the forest for a while now, and she was feeling a bit tired. The light of the setting sun shone through the leaves of the trees and the sky was turning a beautiful orange. "We should probably get going soon," she was thinking. Suddenly, her heart sank. She looked around. "Where is Max?" Max was nowhere to be found. He was gone.

Mabel scrambled around, looking around trees and inside bushes. "Max!" She yelled. No response. She had looked away for only a second and already he had disappeared. "MAX!" She tried again. Still no response. She was panicking now. "Where could he have gone?" "Mabel!" Mabel looked up. She had heard him. She listened, and it came again. "Mabel, come look at this!" Max yelled from somewhere far away. "Look what I found!" "Hold on Max," Mabel replied. "I'm coming!" Following the sound of his voice, Mabel ran deeper into the woods. It was getting quite dark now, and she knew that they should really be home by now. She could see that she was coming up to a clearing, where Max was kneeling over a large crater in the ground. As she came into the clearing, Max spun his head around. "Mabel! Come look!" Mabel relaxed, seeing that Max wasn't in any danger. "Come on Max," She said. "It's getting late, mum will be worrying about us both." She reached for his hand, but he pulled away. "I'll come in a second. Look, something's there." He pointed into the crater. Mabel stopped, examining the crater for the first time. It was large, at least seven meters by diameter, and it was a bit deeper than she had originally thought. But the thing that terrified her was the thing lying inside the crater. A large creature, taller than a man, was lying on its front. It looked somewhat snakelike, with some roughly humanoid features. With bulky arms and legs, and tough, dark skin, it obviously wasn't something from this planet. Luckily, it seemed to be unconscious. She backed away in shock and horror. "Max, we need to go. Right now." "It's ok Mabel, look. He's my friend." Mabel was terrified but also curious. "This is a lifeform from another planet," she thought. "Maybe it's harmless." But none the less, she urged Max to get back from the edge. They watched it

carefully, but it didn't move. "Max, we can go. We can come back with an adult and they'll handle this. We really shouldn't get involved." Max got up and decided to listen to Mabel. He took her hand, but as they were walking away, he stopped and ran back to the creature. "Mabel, it moved! It moved, it did, I saw it!" he shouted in delight. Sure enough, the monster was twitching in the crater. Its skin seemed to be changing colour. What used to be a dark black was now a swirling nebula of blues and purples in the creature's skin. Max ran over to the creature. "It looks so cool," he said. "MAX, GET AWAY FROM IT!" Mabel yelled desperately. But Max was too engrossed in his make-believe game to realise the real danger that was soon to be upon him. "Get up and fight me monster!" he shouted at the creature, whilst brandishing his stick. "I'll kill you with my sword!" All the noise made the lizard creature open its eyes, revealing bright, yellow eyes. It scanned the clearing, and then settled on Max. It growled, seeing him as a threat. The creature roared, letting out a sound that shook the trees and knocked Mabel onto her back. It stood up, facing Max head on. "MAX, RUN!" Max seemed to snap out of his illusion, staring up at the monster, towering over him at almost twice his height. "Nice... Monster?" stuttered Max in terror. He tried to run, but the monster grabbed him, raising him up to his mouth. He opened his huge jaw, exposing large fangs dripping with some sort of acid. Mabel watched in horror as Max, struggling and screaming, was devoured by the monster. "MAX!" she cried, but to no avail. Max was dead. The alien had killed him.