

# Monster in the Maze

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Healing Tree Music and Sounds

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UPVoeWookz8>

I'm walking home through a forest. The air is damp. The leaves crunch under my feet. The trees are ever so tall and lanky, almost as though they are spirits with arms reaching out. But they are silent. I keep going.

Home should have been here by now. I've been walking a long time. But the usual places doesn't seem to be here. I trudge along. I go on and on. Still, I don't see anything familiar. Just more trees. They are at home. They are with their families. They are doing their normal routine, nesting the birds, homing the bees, and carpeting the underbrush.

But my home is not here. I am lost. It is a strange world. My life has vanished.

Eventually, I come to a cave. Oddly, there is a wooden sign posted on a stake that reads:

*"This is the way to your home. Enter at your own risk"*

I am quite happy to see this, although it sounds a bit ominous. And I wonder, how do they know it's me? There is a narrow path along the outside of the cave, not well used, covered in much debris, and not very inviting. And so I peer into the cave.

Inside the cave, it is dark. I'm not very trusting. I'm confused. I thought I knew the way home, and now I find myself so unsure about everything. Why should I be having to make decisions like this? I just want to go home. But I can't, not unless I find the way. And this seems to be my best bet so far. So, I step one foot in.

Immediately, the air cools. The walls are limestone with green lichen covering parts of it. I go further in. The floor becomes rocky and water droplets from above cling to pointed stalactites and then let go and splash to the bottom where they drop their mineral content, and build up strange and unusual formations.

There is a tiny bit of light coming from the back of the cave. I think that is a good sign. Perhaps there is a way out of here after all. A few more steps and I will know. But when I take those steps, what I see is not what I expect. Plastered all over the cave walls are some of my memories in photographs. I take a closer look and begin remembering. I soon realize that they are not all my memories. They are only the bad memories, the times I had hoped to forget, the times I was at my worst. I had hoped they would never show up again, but trying to forget, trying to hide them, only made them stick with me all the longer. I remember each one. Here in this cave are all the bad memories I've ever had, caught on camera. I thought I had gotten rid of them. I remember tearing them up and hiding them. How did they get in here? Is someone trying to play a trick on me? Who did this? Am I being watched? My heart starts pounding quickly. My face goes white as a ghost. This is too much for me to take in all at once. In fear, I turn on my heels and run out as fast as I can. The stone formations seem to grab at me as I flee past them. I am so frightened I let nothing stop me. My adrenaline is running strong, and so do I. I pass every obstacle until I am deep in the woods and daylight again. I pause to catch my breath and to figure out where to go next. The cave must have been a trap, one that I narrowly escaped. I look at the narrow path around the cave and decide that is my only option.

I walk down that path for a while. It is a difficult path to follow, laden with twigs and rocks and branches having fallen long ago. Much time has passed and no one has been this way. These woods are a new world to me.

I finally come to a small clearing. It looks as though it has been used as I see some footprints. As I survey the area, I see several paths leading off in various directions. In fact, each path has a sign posted beside it giving each one names such as "The Rosy Path", "Penny Lane", "The Fast Track", "King of the Road", "The Gambler", and "The Money Pit". I'm not sure what to do. There is no path that shows me the way home. I decide just to sit and ponder for a while. In the center are the remnants of an old campfire with sooty stones and burnt firewood. I make a fire and watch the embers rise above the trees.

“If only I could see what they do. I could not only find my way home, I could find everything and I would have the grandest view of the world that anyone ever had.”

I close my eyes and I am lifted up. I rise above the trees. I am flying. The breeze goes through my hair. I spin slowly around. This is wonderful. I am an ember.

“Ouch!” I shout. My finger is burning. I quickly brush off the ember that settled on it while I was dreaming I was elsewhere. I haven’t gone anywhere. I still have the same choices. I stand up. Well, “The Rosy Path” sounds the best. At the entrance, right underneath the path sign, there is a box with papers, like the kind real estate agents put flyers in. It is labeled “Maps”. That wasn’t there before. I look around and see this same box on each trail.

“How wonderful,” I say. “I can just look at all the maps and find my way home!” I open the lid on the box and pull out one of the maps. I look at it. It’s blank. I turn it over. It’s blank on the back too.

“This is crazy,” I say. And then I pull another one out of the box. Upon it are written the words in bold typeface, “No, this isn’t crazy. This is a blank map. You write on it as you go and mark what you have seen. That’s the way life is.”

I look around at all the other boxes. I can see clearly through the plexiglass each one reads, “Blank Map”.

I shake my head, pause for a moment to regroup. And then, I look ahead and say to the no-one who is with me, “Let’s go!” I step in that direction, and I begin a new path on a blank map. I can already see the roses.

In the beginning, all I see is a well maintained path with gorgeous roses on either side. The scents are grand, and there is every kind of rose imaginable, all in full bloom all the time. I pass a few small cottages, but no one is ever at home. I sleep inside but keep moving during the day. I mark my path on the map, and soon, it is no longer blank, but rather, a myriad of comments and markers, names, and benchmarks. But it is indeed beautiful here on this path, for about six months I walk. But eventually, they start looking withered and dried up. As I keep going, all the blooms eventually die out. The landscape becomes more and more barren. There are no more comfortable places to sleep. All that is

left is the thorns. And then one day almost two years to the day after I had started, I see a clearing ahead. I become joyful and run. This will be home. I know it.

But it isn't. Instead, it is the same clearing where I started from. I see "Penny Lane", and there is "The Fast Track", and "King of the Road" and "The Gambler". They are all here, just as I had left them. I don't understand. One of these must lead out. I'll start another one in the morning. Tonight, I'll sleep by the campfire and dream of embers.

Next morning is a gorgeous day. The sun wakes me and the dew gives me a drink.

"Ah, decision time. Which trail? I close my eyes and repeat "Eenie Meany Miney Moe" and I point. "The Fast Track". "Well good," I say, "Maybe this one won't take me so long." I begin heading down it. It's a strange thing, these paths. Although normally in life, I am with people. But on these paths, I am always alone. The choices we make are indeed choices we alone must be responsible for, and in truth, every path we go down, we go alone. My path is different from everyone else's path who has ever existed. There must be a million million paths, a series of many of them combined in different ways for each person. No two are alike. And with bigger and bolder goals, I finish "The Fast Track" in record time, ending up back at the clearing in only six months. "The Fast Track" just didn't work out for me. Again, I tried, tried real hard, but ... I've gone no where. And I am exhausted.

Over the next few years, I go down each path successively. Several have off shoots deep within them. I try those too. But they are always dead ends. I am simply wasting my time. When I come back to the clearing after trying the last one, all the signs have changed. The old paths are gone, and now, new names are on the posts. Blank maps have been dutifully places within the boxes at each sign. I take my blank maps, which are now a creative mess of sketches and geometric shapes. I place each one into the appropriate box and close the lids. Perhaps someone after me might be able to use them. But as I watch, the pencil marks simply fade away, and soon, they are blank again.

I hear a noise behind me in the clearing. It is the first noise of a living being I have heard since coming to this maze. As I turn, I see a woman in a white dress. She is beautiful. My eyes grow large in amazement.

“Hello!” I say. But I am not sure she is real. And I only stare at her.

“Hello,” she responds. She appears to me like Glenda, the good witch from the Wizard of Oz. That is who she reminds me of. “Are you from “The Wizard of Oz?” I ask.

She laughs, just like Glenda, and says, “Why, no, I am not.” Her smile is invigorating.

“But you have the wand and everything,” I say. “Are you sure?”

“Yes, dear, I’m quite sure,” she affirms. “They’ll be no clicking your heels to get home here.” I look disappointed. “How did you know I was trying to get home?” I ask.

“You are not the first person who hasn’t been able to find their way through life,” she says, quite matter-of-factly.

I ask, “Do you know how I could get home?” suddenly thinking she might have the answer.

“Well of course I do, darling,” she chides me. “You saw it on your first day here. Remember the path that was right in front of you? The one that said, ...

And in unison, we both speak at the same time,

*“This is the way to your home. Enter at your own risk”*

“Yes, yes, I know,” I say. “But I don’t want to remember the things I saw in there. Someone was just playing a mean trick on me! It wasn’t the way at all. I vowed never to go back in there ever again.”

“What’s wrong with looking at those things?” she asks

“Oh, it’s horrible in there,” I answer. “It’s full of all my failures and all the things that make me feel unworthy, useless, and unnecessary. I don’t see any good coming out of that. It would just make me feel bad. I wouldn’t send my worst enemy in there.”

Glenda (I call her that because I know that’s who she is) doesn’t say anything. She just looks at me with big eyes that have a comforting effect. She gives me time to think.

I break the silence by asking the all important question, “Do you really think that cave is the way for me to get home?”

She smiles and says, “How’s it working out for you here?”

I don’t want to say, “Lousy”. But that’s what I would say, if I had the gut to responds. My expression goes from one of questioning to one of resignation. The path I need has always been there. None of these are going anywhere. They are just a mass of mazes that all lead back to the same point. I lower my head and pretend to be interested in my shoes. For a few moments, my shoes are the most interesting things I can imagine. Red shoes. Worn out red shoes. When I look back up, Glenda is gone. I wonder if she ever even really there? Fairies, they leave just when you start to believe in them.

I look back at the narrow path I have come down beside the cave. I have to go back into the cave. And I have to do it now. I begin walking back down the path. I get to the cave entrance again. I see the skull and crossbones I had placed in front of it those many years ago. It is now draped in spider webs. No one has gone in since that day. I wonder if anyone else has even been by here? What a lonely road when you don’t know where you are and you are all alone.

I pause, get my courage up, and walk in.

I go past the same familiar landscape, the stalactites and the stalagmites, the strange and unusual travertine formations, the rocks in the path and the spring waters falling from above, hitting me on the head and making me feel very cold. I shiver as I go further into the cave and the chilled air. Soon, I can see the dim light again and the memories plastered all over the interior. I stop for a moment to look at some of them again.

“Yes, that was me. How embarrassing,” I touched my face in the photo taken so long ago when I was young and vulnerable. I touch my own face. Not much has changed except that I am now old and vulnerable. I haven’t learned much from all those dead end paths that just went in circles. I used up all my strength in search of something I never lost. I slowly studied the photos for a long time. Yes, it was me. Maybe I shouldn’t have been so hard on myself. I look at my face. She isn’t so bad. She just doesn’t know everything. She wasn’t born with a manual, only a blank map that she could fill in day by day.

I keep on going into the den of darkness. Step after step, I can barely see. And as I continue to descend into the unknown, the walls become covered with a slimy mud. The water dripping on me is so cold it's almost frozen. There is only one tiny sparkle of light that keeps me going. Then, to my dismay, I hear vicious noises in the unlit distance, a monster devouring its prey. The air is filled with ugliness. I become very nervous. This is what I fear. There is no exit through here. Only a person-eating monster.

The vile feeding frenzy continues, but I know I have to keep going, live or die. My trembling hands grasp the cave wall. I reach a curve in a large U-turn. Around this bend will undoubtedly be the monster. I turn into the bend and to my surprise, I see chocolate and candy canes growing along the path. I see that the path dumps into a large opening in the cave wall on the far side of this Candy Land. And then I see what is producing the tiny light. It's a crystal prism dangling from the ceiling on one end of a piece of string. Light is streaming into it from a large clearing in the cave that must have some source of light. The crystal is acting like a prism. The crystal is taking the tiny bit of remaining light from the tunnel entrance and splitting it into the colors of the rainbow which look as though they shine into this clearing, this monster den. As I approach it, I can see something in the crystal. What is it? I can't quite tell. I get a little closer. I can see it now. It's scares me the bone. It mirrors the image of the monster in his den. I can see him as though I were looking through a window into his life. He is eating from a large container, stuffing flesh and bones into his mouth, devouring the meat and spitting out the bones. I shudder and take in a very deep breath. Then, I realize I have made too much noise. The monster stops and listens. I remain motionless. I even hold my breath. But it's too late.

The monster slowly turns his head around. He looks directly into the prism. His eyes are yellow and glow. The sweat pours down my face. Then something unexpected happens. The monster smiles, points at me, waves the sideways-queen-of-England wave, stands, and motions me to come in.

For a moment, I don't know what to do. I am frozen. He has obviously seen me. I am like a caught fish ready to be netted. So, I grin back at him, wave, and walk gingerly to the opening.

When he sees my face appear, he said, in a surprisingly clear voice, "Who have we here?"

“Uh, just me,” I say lightly, “Harmless and friendly over here.” I give a nervous laugh.

The monster scratches its head and squints its beady eyes. It just kept staring at me. The monster is ugly and hideous.

“Who is harmless, and why do you want to come in here?” the monster asks.

“Just me, you know, the one in the photos up front, and the one that the sign is written to, you know, the sign that says, and we say in unison,

*“This is the way to your home. Enter at your own risk”*

“Yes, I know that sign,” says the monster. “It’s been up there a long time waiting on you.”

My heart is still racing as I look at his long and pointy teeth, his hunched body covered in fur, and his eyes, those yellow eyes. Hoping to get out quickly and unscathed, I say to him, “I’ve heard there is an exit from the maze here. But, no problem, I’ll come back later if this is any inconvenience. Any chance you take naps at specific times of the day?”

The monster says nothing, but continues to stare at me. He pulls something from the bucket and began crunching the bones in its slimy mouth. I could now get a clear view of the bucket. Printed on the red and white container were the words, “KFC Family Size”. Now I’m really feeling silly. A furrow grows across my eyebrows.

“You eat KFC?” I asked?

“And chocolate bonbons afterwards,” replies the monster. “Want some?” He holds out the bucket in my direction. The slime was drips down the side.

“Thanks,” I said, “Maybe later.” I didn’t want to insult him.

He sits back down in his seat, a large calcitic formation shaped somewhat like a chair. “Come sit down,” he said, as he points to a second one. “We have a lot to talk about. It has taken you much longer to get here than I expected. We have both grown old in the mean time.”



Well, this isn't at all what I was expecting. I'm a bit hesitant. But the monster seems somewhat welcoming, and the journey this far has exhausted me. Maybe it is a trap, but I have nowhere else to go.

"Do you have any questions?" the monster asks me.

And I reply, "Are you going to eat me?"

The monster laughs. "I have fried chicken and chocolate. Why would I need to eat you?"

I continue to stare at the ugly thing, alone and abandoned, shunned by all. The monster is very ugly, but he is polite enough. And other than the slime dripping from his mouth, it had pretty good manners.

I figure if I appease the monster, maybe I can find out where the exit is and manage to get there. So I agree to sit down. And I approach the travertine chair cautiously.

It's looks almost like a throne. I sit down. And then I ask,

"What should I call you?"

The monster says, "Just call me Monster."

"OK," I say. "Where do you get fried chicken?"

"I walk out the cave behind me," Monster says. "Just outside the maze walls."

"Really?" I question and strangely, start warming up to this ugly thing. I continue to ask questions. It has been so long since I talked to anyone genuine, or anyone at all. I begin to get a little used to it, and funny, the monster isn't as ugly as I first thought it was. It's almost like his slime is clearing up. As it turns out, he is really just another being, perhaps no better, no worse than me, just different. Finally, we both become quiet. He looks at me for a long time.

"Why are you staring at me?" I asked.

"I haven't seen you for years." Monster says. "I heard you come close once. You ran and never came back. I was very sad about that. I spend a lot of time alone."

"Alone?" I ask quite surprised. "Aren't there any other ugly creatures?"

“You won’t let anyone in here,” he says. “You put up that skull and crossbones, and no one will come.”

“I’m just warning them,” I said, “of what is in here, what they will find. I’m keeping them out of this dark place.”

“It wouldn’t be dark if you turned on the light,” says the monster. “In the dark, the unknown is scary.”

What he says is true. We are in semi blackness, the kind that makes trees look like witches. The thing was horrible to look at, especially when one isn’t used to it. The monster looked like my worst nightmare. In fact, I’m recalling, it was my worst nightmare.”

“I don’t think you like me very much,” says Monster.

“I don’t know you. How can I like you if I don’t know you?” I ask.

“You really don’t know who I am?” Monster asks.

“No, I don’t,” I say defiantly, stubbornly denying the obvious.

Monster looks directly into my eyes, and says with sincerity, “You put me here, long ago. We had been friends, and I trusted you. You put me in here and left me alone. You said you’d be back, but you only came back when you wanted to throw things away, things that didn’t fit the life you thought you had to lead. I’ve been waiting. Waiting, for a very long time.” The monster pulled out a bunch of loose photos. “You put these in here, too.”

I gasped. “That’s me when I was five, and didn’t want to obey my mother so I cried and she got mad. And this one, I was eight, and couldn’t understand algebra. I thought I was dumb. And here, here I’m 14, and it was because of me we lost the game. I was so ashamed. And here I failed a test and the teacher told me I should be ashamed. I thought I threw these away.”

“You did,” Monster says. “You used this cave as a burial ground for things you didn’t want to see anymore, things you wanted to make disappear like they never happened. You wanted to feel good about yourself, and these didn’t fit the image. So you wanted to forget them.”

My head is spinning. I am remembering all those times in my life that I thought I could forget, but I hadn't actually forgotten them. What the monster is saying is right. Angrily, I shout to the thing, "Why did you save these?"

Monster cocks his head somewhat sideways and says, "Because I liked them. I wanted to remember you. I think you are beautiful."

Tears start to form on my cheeks. "Why did you show me these memories?"

"I didn't," he said. "They are just here, preserved within the walls of your own creation. You built this place, all on your own. I'm just a picture you put in here no different from all the others."

With disbelief and bitterness, I ask "Me" in undertones of distrust and a voice filled with fear, "Who are you?"

Monster says to me in a voice that echoes down the cave walls, "I am you. I am the part of you you don't like, the part you are ashamed of, the bad little girl. I am your fear of being rejected, not loved, not good enough. I am your ugliest self. I am the person you despise. I am the person you are afraid to show to the world, the one that makes mistakes, the one that doesn't meet up to her mother's expectations, the one who feels she has to hide any imperfection to be accepted. I am the person you believe the real you to be."

Monster pauses then says, "You're better than that. That's why I'm still here. If I left, you'd never find me. I had to stay until you came back. I waited, because someone had to tell you that you are so much better than all that. That's what I've been waiting to tell you."

I think about what Glenda said to me, "What's wrong with looking at all those things?"

I look up at Monster. "Can I see those photos again?"

He says nothing, but hands me a whole box of photos as he reaches for a new bucket of chicken. He sees the surprise in my look, and says, "I eat for comfort." Then he digs into the new bucket.

I spend many an hour looking at all the old photos. Some make me laugh. Most make me cry. But the biggest thing that happens is that I realize that young girl was just an

innocent bystander who deserves happiness as much as anyone. I feel differently about her, and see her in a new light, the light she should really be in. I have empathy for her, with myself. I couldn't help her back then. But maybe I can help her now.

I sit with Monster for a long, long time. Not the monster eating the chicken. The monster in the photos, the monster who had thrown the photos in here, the monster who couldn't love herself. It is painful and deserves a good cry, but numbness comes in to take the pain away. Then anger takes its turn. Anger says, "Why me? Why did no one protect me? Is a little girl supposed to go out and find her own protector?"

But anger isn't welcome forever. There is no one here to be angry with. And so I move on to the next phase and focus on the task at hand, since I am free of the ruminations that used to preoccupy my mind. And the most important task now, is getting a true picture of who I really am, getting to know the real monster. There is a strange phenomenon that says, when you don't like someone, they start looking more ugly, but when you start liking someone, they start looking better. And the monster was starting to look better. Which proves that looks are not an absolute. People see beauty in many things, depending on their perspective. And the more I get used to the monster, the less it disgusts me. Slime falls off and eyes become bright, teeth are not so sharp. In fact, he looks more like a teddy bear. And besides, anything that like fried chicken and chocolate can't be all bad. I wondered how long it, rather, I had been trapped here in the dark.

"When did you first come here?" I ask.

"Once upon a time, when I was very little. Every time I got my feelings hurt, I came in here to get away, to try and mend those feelings," Monster tells me.

"How did you get stuck here?" I ask.

Monster replies, "I'd mend the feelings and go back out, but they'd just get broken again. I realized they could break them faster than I could mend them. So I buried them here, but they kept following me. Finally, I didn't try anymore. I gave up. And I just stayed here. That was the easiest thing I could do. At least I could enjoy my own company, alone, and not get hurt."

"I did that, too," I say, "I mean, I went to my room and stayed by myself. I mean, yeah, I guess we both did the same thing, sort of, exactly the same thing."

I keep forgetting he is me and I am him. We are both Monster. But how do I look to him. The more I listen to Monster and talk to him, the more affection and affinity I felt. He was still ugly, but as we got to be better acquainted, I didn't mind it so much. He had kind of cute grin, sort of like that old stuffed animal I used to have that looked like a one-eyed cyclops. I loved that. We talked for hours till most of the day was gone. Monster told me about his life in the cave and I told Monster about my life in the maze. I never would have thought the way out was so close. It was right in front of me all the time, so close I didn't see it. And there was nothing in here to be afraid of. The truth was in here, and it was a mix of bad and good. But that's exactly what happens when we humans grow up. So I was doing exactly what I was supposed to be doing.

After a while, Monster asks, "What do you make of me? Am I really so horrible?"

I say, "You're not as bad as I thought." I pause, pensively, and continue. "You have just as much a right to exist on this planet as I do. You are lovable. It doesn't matter what you look like."

Monster smiles at me. And as he smiles, some of the slime dries up, and the filth begins to drop away. We have fun talking, understanding each other so well. I tell stories about ridiculous things I did, and it reminds me of some of my most embarrassing moments. Monster laughs. But it's really me laughing, laughing for the first time at my own self. The longer I stay, the cleaner Monster gets until finally I can see that it is me, a little worse for wear, but healing. I smile at myself and myself smiles back. And a very beautiful smile it is.

"Are you starting to see me for who I really am?" Monster asks.

I nod, "Yes, you're looking quite human, and almost a decent person. We are one and the same. It seems I'm not the monster I thought I was, nor the happy go lucky image I projected out there. I'm a mix of both."

"I was waiting for that," Monster says. "I've been on the edge of my seat all my life waiting to hear those words." And with that revelation, Monster stands up and moves out of the path of the light, which enters through the exit and pours into the cave around his enormous body, lighting it up with a most magnificent rainbow. You see, there was another crystal dangling over the exit. It took the outside daylight and broke it into the rainbow. When the rainbow of colored lights passes through the crystal on the other side

where I had come in, it converted all the rainbow colors into white light, which is the light that brought me here through the dark entrance. And when the light floods in from both sides, it lights up this entire room, showing a ceiling of hundreds of beautiful crystal chandeliers, all glistening rainbow and white, rainbow and white, the most incredible I have ever seen, and in each prism is my image, or is it the monster?

Monster pulls down the crystal prisms hanging over the exit with my image in it and hands it to me. We won't be needing that anymore, says Monster. I tie it around my neck. He takes the other one and ties it around his neck.

"I can keep up with you this way," he says. "I can go on a very-long-awaited vacation now and not worry about you."

"I don't want you to go, I say. And before he can say anything, I follow with an invitation, "Would you take me across the street and have some KFC with me before you go?"

I laugh nervously, hoping he won't go so soon. I fill in the silence with, "You aren't at all what I was expecting. I thought you might be a fire breathing dragon."

"Oh, I can breathe fire alright," he said. "But not when you're around. Keep looking at that prism and I'll always be with you." He turned to go, and I saw a big ring of smoke rising from him. It was probably just the mist.

"Where are you going on your vacation?" I shout after him. "Oh," he ponders, "I thought I'd go to Paris and do a little painting with Monet."

And with that, he walks out of my life. I wave, but he doesn't see. I start to shout, but the shout fades to a whisper as I say, "I'll meet you there, someday."

Suddenly, a shadow appears. The monster has turned around and stands in the opening. I run to him. Monster pulls me close and gives me a monster hug, each of our two separate crystals meeting in the dead center of the exit.

And with that, I have done what I set out to do, find my home. All around me is gray rock, but the inspiration for color has returned to me. The chandeliers on the ceiling burn brightly within the cave and reveal only neutral colors of grays and tans. But I want to see the many colors of the cave because I know I am home. So I take a great big breath and blow as hard as I can, and I blow all the dust away, and underneath it all, is my home with

all my things in it. I sit on my own couch and for the first time in a long time, I have nothing to do but sit there and appreciate it. And so I just sit, looking for that illusive happiness I so desperately want. I look around at every single thing in that house, a book, a painting, an old trophy, a large telephone sitting on the desk. But I don't feel the urge to do anything with them. There is no to-do list. They are just things, not projects. I can enjoy them for their structure and form. I have never looked at things like that before. If I saw a book, it was something I needed to read. If I saw a phone, there was someone I needed to call. But now the book is a piece of delicate leather with yellowed pages that hold black words that are disjointed and have no meaning other than its own isolated definition. There is no story. And without a story, there is no suffering. What I have found is peace. And that is what I need even more than happiness.

And like the prism that splits white light into a rainbow and puts it back together again, the monster and I have a colorful assortment of diverging personality traits which are fused and give birth to a whole human being with many parts, a spinning galaxy freed from Pandora's box of limitations that spins ever and ever faster until it spirals into a sphere of bright white light radiating out in all directions.

Monster is gone and becomes mere imagination, until I look in my crystal and see him there. He is waving and pointing at me, and I hear the words, "I am always with you."

Thank you and good night.