

MONSTACADEMY

The Halloween Parade





CHAPTER 1

The Letter

To most children, their school seems perfectly ordinary. I imagine that yours is the same. I bet that when you turned up for school this morning there was little chance of you bumping into a werewolf. There are probably not many vampires in your class. The chance of you sitting next to a ghost or banshee in maths is, I would guess, very remote.

This was also true of St. Agatha's Primary School. St Agatha's was a lovely, small school with a tree-lined playing field. There were just enough children to keep it interesting

but not quite enough to be big and scary. Trixie Grimble was nine and three quarters and until recently, St Agatha's had been her school.

It had all started with a letter, as these things so often do. This particular letter had arrived at the beginning of July in a plain brown envelope. There was a neat, handwritten address on the front, and it was stamped with the mark of Wexbridge Borough Council. It was clearly labelled for the attention of Trixie Grimble. Trixie's mum had done what mothers so often do when they think that they know best. She had opened it herself.

The Letter

Dear Miss Grimble,

We are so sorry to inform you that due to budget cuts at Wexbridge Borough Council we are closing St. Agatha's Primary School.

However, please do not panic. We have been able to find you a place at Monroe's Academy for the Different. We do hope that you enjoy your time there. They are very much looking forward to welcoming you into their halls.

Yours sincerely

Mr Bothwold-Oxelton

Mr Bothwold-Oxelton

P.S. In order to make up for this terrible inconvenience, I have enclosed a coupon for a year's supply of toilet paper from Keith's Toilet Emporium on the High Street.

You can imagine the scream that Mrs Grimble let out upon reading the letter. It quite disturbed Mrs Burbage, the nosey next-door neighbour who was stood near to the open kitchen window listening for titbits of information whilst pretending to trim her bush.

Trixie had been peacefully sleeping in her bedroom when her mum's shriek had echoed through the house. She leapt from her bed and raced down the stairs. She nearly tripped over her ancient and overweight cat, Snot, in the process. Trixie found her mum in quite the tizz.

"What is it, Mum?" she asked sleepily. "Is that a letter? It's addressed to me!" she shouted. She couldn't help but notice the empty brown envelope slowly soaking in a

pool of milk. Trixie snatched the note from her mum's unresisting hand and read it for herself.

Trixie loved her mum, and she was sure that her mum loved her back in her own way. They had never been incredibly close preferring to go about their business on their own and occasionally meeting up for dinner in the kitchen. Trixie had always got the sense that her mother would prefer it if they both had separate houses to themselves. They wouldn't get under each other's feet so often. Now, it seemed, she would get her wish.

"Monroe's Academy for the Different?" Trixie gasped, not believing the evidence in front of her very nose. "I can't go there, and you can't make me! You do know what they call it, don't you?"

Monstacademy!" she continued. Trixie was agitated because, quite rightly, nobody likes moving to a new school.

Trixie had quite a nice group of friends at St Agatha's, and she didn't really think that she needed any new ones. Certainly none that went to Monstacademy! And what was worse was that Monroe's Academy for the Different was just that. It was a school for the different.

Now, when you or I think about people that are different, we might think of somebody who is considerably shorter or very much taller than most. Or perhaps somebody who might have a head full of vivid purple hair. They might even have a large boil on the end of their nose just waiting to be popped. They may even look a little bit like a

potato.

That is not the type of different child that Monroe's Academy for the Different usually takes in. You see, Monstacademy was really very different indeed. Many of the pupils who attended were what you or I might call the supernatural.

Wait, I hear you asking, do you mean that there is a school for superheroes and those with special powers?

Were you to ask me that question I would simply scoff and say, "Of course not, that is ridiculous!" Instead, Monstacademy is a school for those of a spookier nature such as vampires, werewolves and even the odd witch or wizard.

Trixie was all too aware of the

type of people that attended Monstacademy. There were always rumours at school about how their vampire pupils would be sent down into the village for sucking practise. She'd heard that the bogie-boys and -girls would be instructed to hide under the beds of normal boys and girls to practise making them scream. She didn't like it one bit.

"You know as well as I do that I've wanted to get Trixie into a boarding school for a long time. I never meant somewhere like this, though! I had high hopes for Snufflingberrys or Blimpingtons. They'll drink her blood and turn her into a zombie! What will the neighbours think if she's off flying around all night as a bat?" her mother had sobbed to her boyfriend Rob when he'd returned home from work on that fateful day.

Trixie's dad had run away with his rock band when she was tiny and her mum's current boyfriend, Rob, had been living with them for a year now. She didn't like him one bit. His company manufactured toothbrush bristles. Rob's job was to sell them to all sorts of companies in all sorts of exotic countries, and he often spent days away from home. He was also the sort of adult who thought he was really good at talking to children. In fact, he was boring and patronising and didn't actually like spending any time with them. He'd made this very clear when Trixie overheard him talking to her mum on the stairs one evening, a few days after the letter had arrived.

"Now listen," he'd began, reassuringly. "I'm going to be working away a lot for the next

year. You don't really want to be left alone to look after a growing girl, do you? Monstacademy is a boarding school. She'll be living there. You'll have all that time for yourself. You know how you've always wanted the time to train a cat circus? Well, now you'll have that time! Besides, she'll be much better off around other children. She'll get bored here just you two."

"Well, there is that. In a way it would be kinder to send her. But what about the other children? I've heard that they have vampires and zombies and everything else there. They might try to suck her blood!"

"Well, everyone needs a hobby," he'd replied, clearly unconcerned about Trixie's neck or the threat of eternal damnation. "Besides, those

are just rumours. It's probably just a few extra hairy kids and some of those moody ones that like to wear black and listen to depressing music. You know the ones I mean..."

"Teenagers?" offered her mum.

"Yeah probably," Rob trailed off. As usual, he was distracted by a most terribly important business call on his mobile phone.

And that had been that. Rob had persuaded her mum that a little time to herself would be a good thing. Even though she was never comfortable with Trixie mixing with what she called "their sort", Trixie's mother had decided that having her out of the house was worth the risk. She'd even spent time looking for kittens that looked suitably athletic.

Trixie's displeasure had only been matched by Snot's who now spent most of his time on top of the fridge in protest.

"You'll make lots of new and exciting friends!" her mum had argued after one particularly bad fight.

"But, Mum," she'd wailed, "I am nearly ten years old, I'm pretty sure I've got all the friends I'll ever need!"

So it had continued throughout the summer. Eventually the holidays had drawn to an end. Uniforms and equipment had been bought and Trixie soon found herself stood at the front door to her new life.