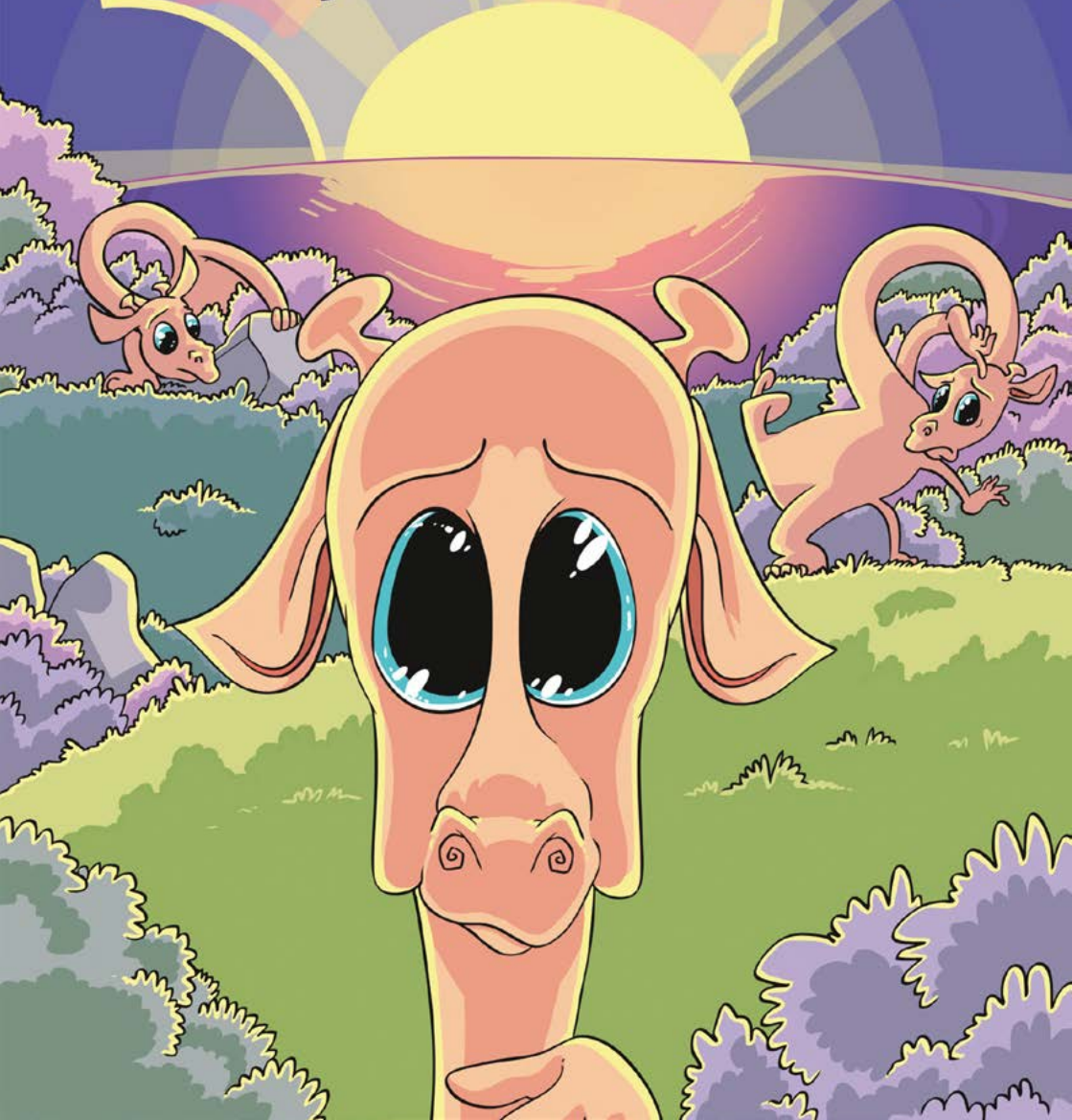


KAROLINA JEKIELEK

THE Navel Monster



Karolina Jekielek
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Karolina Jekielek

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www.e-bookowo.pl
Kontakt: wydawnictwo@e-bookowo.pl

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Preface

How it came to life, no one knows. Even the most eminent scientists have argued how such a monster evolved.

But before it became known, it had been lonely, ownerless, dejected and always in the search of its master.

The Navel Monster is asymmetrically four-legged. It has one left leg, and three right legs, its neck is standing out so that the monster can see far. Furless and cold, it has been looking for the master, but does not know what it is searching for.

Sadly, the monster does not speak, but answers yes or no by nodding or shaking its head. It has never heard any speech, it has never heard any sound, it has just come to life.

But against all the odds, it sets off for the journey into the unknown.

And beware as you never know when or where the

monster appears. It might be beneath your tree, it might be across your road, it might be anywhere, and maybe it is you who the navel monster is looking for.



Stepping from the abyss, the newly born monster heads north. It traverses the rocky landscape unaware of the dangers that lurk around, unaware of the world, animals, people and most of all, the goal. Its inner drive inexplicably propels the monster into the search.

And so it traverses the world getting to know its wonders. The sun that shines so brightly, so beautiful, so warm. The navel monster feels the warmth on its whole body radiating from the top to the bottom.

It feels the pleasure, but as the sun prevails and continues to shine throughout the journey, it becomes daily life, and the bliss fades away. The enchantment yields to worry.

The anxiety stirs, because it is not the sun the navel monster is looking for. It must be something else, it must be something the navel monster feels it belongs to. The sun is wonderful, but it belongs to the world, to everything around. The monster feels that what it

is looking for is more unique, just for it and not to be shared.

And so the monster continues the journey.



Nights fall, days dawn. The navel monster learns the world. The rocks, the pebbles, the grass sprouts. Suddenly, a meadow emerges from the hills. How stunning it is!

The navel monster smiles broadly having learnt what mouth does when the monster feels something is good.

It strives to move more quickly, but the odds are against. Having one left leg and three right legs, it wobbles and strives to speed up. To no avail. Not knowing how to run and what running actually is, the monster inches forward.

To the monster's amazement, the meadow unfolds its gems.

Grass, daisies, daffodils, forget-me-nots and many wildflowers. A rainbow of flowers spreads in front

of the monster. Seeing so many different colours for the first time, smelling the sweet scent, the monster feels dizzy. But what a dizziness it is!

Awe and joy. It must be good. The monster feels it. The grass and the flowers dab the monster. The meadow is so soft. And then, the monster jumps into the greenery rolling in the meadow, taking pleasure in feeling every blade of grass and every petal of a flower. Absorbing the bliss, the monster fills up with a new experience, 'Ah, so nice,' it must think.

After a few minutes, the monster stretches its left leg, then the right one, the righter, and the rightest to have the balance. It shakes off as if the greenery started to prickle the monster's delicate skin.

Standing firmly, it looks around. The stirring has begun. The meadow is good, the flowers are beautiful, their scents are pleasant, but they are not what the monster has been looking for.

Where might it be? Is it anywhere here? And so the monster peers curiously around.