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RAZORBILL

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ZORGANAZOO

CHAPTER 1
a shadowy form



ere
is a story

that's stranger than strange.

Before we begin you may want to arrange:

a blanket,
a cushion,
a comfortable seat,
and maybe some cocoa and something to eat.

I'll warn you, of course, before we commence,
my story is eerie and full of suspense,
brimming with danger and narrow escapes,
and creatures of many remarkable shapes.
Dragons and ogres and gorgons and more,
and creatures you've not even heard of before.
And faraway places? There's plenty of those!
(And menacing villains to tingle your toes.)

So ready your mettle and steady your heart.
It's time for my story's mysterious start...

We begin in a subway, under the ground,
where people in trains go rolling around,
in hurrying haste and in scurrying mobs,
wandering off to their ponderous jobs.

Much of the time they would linger in vain.
They would stand in the station awaiting a train.
They would push in between the ticket machines,
like fish huddled into a tin of sardines.

They clutched at the purses and cases they brought,
anxious and angry and overly wrought,

hoping a train would come barreling past,
pick them up quick, and dash away fast!

There was one little girl who waited as well:
a girl by the name of

Katrina Katrell.

While everyone else was busy or bored,
this one little girl should not be ignored.
For unlike the crowd, she was never inert.
Her senses were sharp and awake and alert.

She kept to herself, but she wasn't alone.
She was joined by her guardian, Mrs. Krabone,
who stood with Katrina, clutching her hand,
in the flickering light of the passenger stand.

They were hunched near the tunnel
of mortar and brick
where the lighting was dim and shadows were thick,
where Katrina was curious, squinting her eye...
she could swear that a *creature* was shuffling by.

At first it was vague, just a shadowy form,
like a ship in a mist or the fog of a storm.
So she gaped with a steady, unfaltering stare,
to determine for certain:

Was anything there?

Yet try as she might, the tunnel was black,
obscuring the path of the train and the track.

She nearly was ready to give up her search,
when the subway arrived in a lumbering lurch.
It showered the station in glimmering light,
and that's when she saw something scurry from sight!

"Hey, Krabby!" she whispered. "There's something I see.
It's smaller than you, but it's bigger than me.
It's loping around in the tunnel, I swear!
It looked like a warthog, or maybe...a bear!"

"Don't call me 'Krabby!'" spat Mrs. Krabone,
in a violent and rather vociferous tone.
"You're a fool and a fibber!" the woman accused.
"Such ludicrous lying is never excused!"

You see, my good reader, this had happened before,
since Katrina Katrell—well, she loved to explore!

On her way home from school, whenever she could,
she would cut through a park or a forested wood;
and more often than not, in some part of a park
where no one else went until after dark,
she would see something strange, something utterly odd,
something hulking or hairy...and possibly clawed.
She then would run home, with a story to tell—
where Mrs. Krabone would do nothing but yell.

"Katrina!" she'd holler. "You ignorant thing!
Your brain must be made out of paper and string!
All this rot about yetis and monsters in lochs!
They're nothing but lies! They're nothing but crocks!"

Old Krabby, you see, was a bit of a witch.
In the pit of her heart was a serious glitch.
She didn't have time for the fanciful things,
like pirates and gadgets and creatures and kings.

She believed that a girl should be perfectly prim,
and shouldn't be guided by whimsy and whim.

As such, she was certain Katrina was nuts:
Too lively, too feisty, and too full of guts.

Yet the two were related. Yes, that much was true,
but *how* they were linked—well, nobody knew.

Their relation was distant, hard to define,
yet connected somehow by a family line,
like forty-first cousins, ten times removed
(the bloodline, however, had never been proved).



And so, once again, they had come to collide,
with each of them taking their opposite side,
as they stood near the tracks, where under the ground,
Katrina thought beasties were creeping around.

“But Krabby!” she cried. “It really is true!
It looked like a thing that escaped from a zoo!
But I’m not a dullard! And I’m not a dunce!
So you gotta believe me, if only this once!”

Mrs. Krabone said nothing at first.
Her face went all flushed, as if ready to burst.
Then her lips twisted up into sort of a grin,
and she wrangled Katrina by ear and by chin.
Leaning in close, so Katrina could hear,
she whispered maliciously into her ear:

“You listen to me. This *lying* must end.
When we get home, here is what I intend:
I will call up my friend, a Lobotomy Doc,
a talented man at the butchery block.

His scalpels are polished to shimmering shine.
He’ll slice from your eye to the top of your spine.

He’ll cut from your brow to the top of your head.
Your brain? He’ll replace it with something instead,
something quite nice, like a pastry or cake,
or why not a succulent caribou steak?

Your original brain, he will lock in a box.
For that’s what they do, those Lobotomy Docs.”

Before the poor girl could swallow her fear,
Mrs. Krabone gave a tug on her ear.
So writhing and wriggling and wincing in pain,
Katrina was bullied inside of the train...

The subway struck up with its *clackity-clacks*,
rolling into the tunnel and over the tracks.

Katrina sat quietly watching the wall;
it was smeared with graffiti and scandalous scrawl.
She was searching the dark for the thing she had seen.
What was it? she thought. *What could it have been?*

At first, there was nothing that seemed out of place,
but everything changed...when she made out:

a face!

It was surely a face she would never forget.
It peered from the dark in an odd silhouette.

It wasn't a hog, or a bear, or a cat,
though perhaps if all three were stirred in a vat,
muddled and mixed into something anew:
a wildebeest, polar bear, antelope stew!

There were horns on its head, all twisty and curled;
they shot from its noggin, they spiraled and swirled.
Its shoulders, however, were stocky and stout,
and a thicket of whiskers hung down from its snout.

But perhaps the most shocking, incredible sight
she saw when the creature leaned into the light.

Not a soul would believe that it wasn't a lie,
but this creature—*this thing*—it was wearing a tie!

The train sped ahead and the shadows were back.
The creature was lost in the Stygian black.
It was gone in an instant, gone in a blink,
but not before giving Katrina...*a wink!*

She turned to her guardian, there at her side.
She was certain the truth could not be denied.

“You see now?” she said. “You can’t disagree!
You looked out the very same window as me.

A creature! A thing! It was just like I said!
Perhaps there are more of them, farther ahead!”

But Mrs. Krabone was severely irate.
She spat when she spoke with fury and hate.
“A creature?!” she shrieked. “A ‘mysterious beast?!’
You’re crazy, Katrina, and that’s saying the least!

You listen to me, you insufferable brat.
What you saw—it was probably only a rat!

So I’ve had quite enough! You tell me no more!
Your lies and your tales and your fibs I abhor!
If you tell me again, I shall do it myself:
I’ll scoop out your brain for a spot on my shelf!”

“But didn’t you see it? His horns and his beard?
And he winked I believe, which was awfully weird.”



Mrs. Krabone made a shriek like a bell.

“Now you listen up,
Ma. Katrina Katrell!

I’m the boss around here! I’m your guardian, see?
Why else would your parents have sent you to me?

Well, I’ll tell you why—because they know what’s *best!*
That’s why they made such a special request:
That *I* be the one to raise you up right!
So you’d learn to be quiet and nice and polite!

So from now on, *you pest*, you’ll say not a word!
You’ll say nothing silly or strange or absurd!
You’ll be a good girl and you’ll do what I say!

You’ll shut off your mouth for
the rest of the day!”

So Katrina was silent. She made not a sound,
but her eyes remained actively darting around,

watching the weave of the wandering track,
examining close every cranny and crack,
in search of the thing that had briefly appeared,
all hairy, with horns and a whiskery beard.

A creature?

A BEASTIE?

**A
TROLL**

or



a gnome?

But she saw nothing more,
all

the

way

home...