

## **The Mud Monster**

When you think about the word “monsters” a lot of things probably pop into your head. Scary things. Ferocious things. Things that hide under your bed or growl in the dark. But this monster is different. This monster is something you probably never thought of before, because this monster isn’t a monster at all.

A while ago, there was a ten year old boy named Eddy. He was just like any other kid. He went to school, he played outside, and he went to sleep at night. But Eddy was curious, very curious. He wondered about everything. How was the world created? Why don’t dogs fly? But there was one question he thought about more than any other. One that stayed in his mind every single day.

It was a cold, rainy day and at exactly 3:45 pm, the school bell rang. Time to head home. Nothing weird about that, right? Well, that’s where this story begins. Eddy walked home, boots splashing in puddles, when he passed by the Forbidden Forest. Every day, he walked past those dark trees. And every day, he asked himself the same thing: Why is it called the Forbidden Forest? What’s so bad in there? Why is nobody allowed inside?

But whenever he asked someone, he always got the same answer. His teacher would say, “That forest isn’t something you need to worry about, Eddy.” His father would grumble, “Nothing special about it. Just some old trees.” His mom would sigh, “Oh sweetie, we’ve been over this. The Forbidden Forest… it’s just not something you should worry about.”

But Eddy couldn’t let it go. Why wouldn’t anyone tell him the truth? What was so wrong about wanting to know what was beyond those trees?

That night, after dinner Eddy made up his mind. He was going to find out what was in the Forbidden Forest. As the clock ticked away and the rain continued to drip against his window, Eddy quietly finished his meal, his thoughts racing. He made a plan. Two weeks passed, and Eddy grew more and more worried. He knew it was time to turn his plan into action...

That night during dinner, Eddy didn't say a word to his parents. They were too busy with work, too distracted to notice. After all, he'd been planning this for weeks. He waited until everything was perfect, then slipped out of his chair. His heart thudded in his chest, but he didn't let fear stop him.

Eddy headed straight for his room, where he grabbed his backpack right off his bed and started to pack it with all the essentials. He decided he needed his flashlight, a little food he took from his stash under his bed, his camera, and a water bottle. Eddy was ready, there was no going back now. As quietly as he could, he slid open the window and jumped out.

Tonight, he was going to do what no one else had been brave enough to do. Right then Eddy hit the ground silently. He started to run as fast as he could, remembering where to go. "Left here, turn right there, head straight" and before he knew it he was standing in front of long dark trees and a huge forest waiting to be discovered.

Eddy took a deep breath before going into the mysterious forest, and started to walk in. All he saw to his surprise were trees, more and more trees, everything looked the same. That's when he realized he didn't know the way back! He kept thinking "this was such a stupid idea, how will I get home?!" "I never should have done this, I should have just listened."

Eddy kept walking desperate to find his way back, not a different thought in his mind. Just as Eddy was about to give up, something strange caught his eye far in the distance, barely visible through the trees, stood a crooked little cottage. It didn't belong. "A cottage? Out here?" he whispered, confused.

The Forbidden Forest was supposed to be empty. But this, this was something. Heart pounding, Eddy broke into a run, the cottage getting closer with every step. Maybe someone lives there, he thought. Maybe someone who can tell me what's really going on.

It looked old and rusty. Vines took over most of the building, mud basically covering everything. To Eddy it looked like no one had lived there for years. Eddy knocked on the door three times. "BAM, BAM, BAM." No answer. He

knocked again. “BANG, BANG, BANG.” And the door swung open, Eddy took a step back as he saw an old man probably in his 50s, maybe 60s, walk to the door.

The man looked him up and down, and all of a sudden out of nowhere the man began screaming at him. He said “What are you doing here, this place is not for you! Go back home. Leave before anything happens!”

Eddy answered, “Before what happens? What are you talking about? I need answers! Please!!!” The man looked at him and said, “Just go home boy, I said LEAVE, before something happens!” “But I don’t know my way back.” “Walk straight, and you’ll find your way back, and be careful not to step in mud, do not ask why, just do it.”

Eddy knew the man would not tell him anything else so he ran back into the trees, until he was far from the cottage. Not long after, Eddy saw a little glimpse out of the forest, just a few miles away. Now he took his breath and walked forward.

But as he was walking he felt something squishy on his feet, something slimy, like it was absorbing him. Scared, he looked down and he saw what was there, he saw the terrifying sight of MUD. Exactly what the old man said not to touch, and probably not to even go near at all.

Eddy was petrified. He saw the mud somehow going on him and just not coming off. Until he wasn’t able to see his feet. Eddy continued, tired but desperate to get help before the thing/mud absorbed him completely. Eddy was frozen in fear, the mud crawling higher and higher up his legs like it was alive, like it had a mind of its own.

It was cold, thick and heavy. “HELP!” he screamed, but no one was there to hear him. He tried to move, but every step got harder and harder. Finally, after what felt like forever, he stumbled out of the forest and ran all the way home.

By then, the sun was just coming up. He opened the front door quietly and tiptoed up the stairs, careful not to wake his parents. In his room, he

dropped his bag now covered in mud onto his bed and turned to look in the mirror.

What he saw was terrifying, it was different, it was gross, and something he never thought was even possible. He looked like a huge splotch of mud. His whole body was covered in thick, slimy brown goo. His shirt looked like it had melted into his skin, and his arms were dripping.

His hair was full of leaves and twigs, and his face barely looked like a face anymore, and when he opened his mouth, a bit of mud slipped out. Eddy did not know what to do. He was terrified of how he looked, but even more terrified of what would happen when his parents woke up and saw him.

He felt worried, anxious, and completely lost. So he did the only thing he could think of, he ran out of the house, desperate to find help. He wandered through the city, searching for familiar faces: family friends, classmates, neighbors.

But no matter who he approached, nobody wanted anything to do with him. People stared, pointed, and then quickly turned away. Finally, Eddy spotted his best friend. Hope lit up in his chest, but when he ran toward him, his friend recoiled in horror.

“What are you? You look... disgusting. Get away from me!” Those words cut deeper than anything else. Even his best friend wanted nothing to do with him.

Eddy felt sad and completely lost. He didn’t know what to do, only that the thought of seeing his parents’ reaction terrified him most of all. That would hurt more than anything. Eventually, they would find out but by then, he decided, he wouldn’t be there to see it.

Eddy read stuff like this all the time in his comic books, about how villains get created. But he never thought he’d actually feel it, the moment when a hero breaks, when loneliness hurts more than anything else, and something darker begins.

Sitting there, covered in mud and rejection, Eddy realized he was living one of those stories. He thought of the Joker. In the comics, the Joker didn't start out evil. He was just a man who had one really bad day, the kind of day where everything goes wrong, where the whole world seems against you. And that was it. That one day changed him forever.

Then there was Venom. Venom was about rejection too. He lost everything. His job, his pride, the people he cared about. Nobody wanted him. And then that strange black symbiote came along, feeding on his anger, giving him power but twisting it into something terrifying.

Venom wasn't born a monster. He was made into one. And now Eddy finally understood. Villains didn't come out of nowhere. They came from pain, from loneliness, from being pushed too far. And sitting there on that curb, dripping with mud, Eddy felt it happening to him. And that was the night Eddy stopped being a boy... and started to become the Mud Monster.

End of part 1