GOOD TO SEE YOU, FRIEND! You must be wondering who I am. Well, despite looking like a schoolteacher, I am actually a monster hunter and, if I may say so myself, one of the most famous of my kind. My name is Van Helsing.

If you are reading this, it means you are interested in the terrifying world of monsters and ghosts. To start, don’t listen to other so-called experts who tramp around brandishing sophisticated, powerful weapons; the most important thing when dealing with these creatures is not technology, but intelligence. After all, that’s how I beat my mortal enemy, Count Dracula. And I’m not talking about some tiny, silly monster . . . but the lord of all vampires!

In fact, don’t believe for one second that garlic and holy water are all you need to beat this evil, bloodthirsty fiend, as others may say! Trust me, what you need above all else is a cool head and a cunning mind – requirements when preparing to hunt some of the most horrible and frightening creatures known to humankind.

For the journey you are about to embark on in the following pages – filled with vengeful ghosts, restless spirits and the most bloodcurdling, terrifying monsters – you will need all the courage you can muster . . . and even a touch of madness!

This book is divided into sections. Each one relates to a certain part of the world and includes a map with the various creatures marked to help you locate them.

You’ll find descriptions of these monsters: some are brief, summarizing only the most important facts; others are more detailed, explaining the precise locations of sightings, characteristics that make them so infamous, and methods for how to beat them. Some of the most important monsters – significant either for their fame or cruelty – have two pages dedicated to them, with more detailed information on where they live and curious legends about their existence.
**Headless Man**

**WHERE:** Edinburgh Castle in Scotland

**CHARACTERISTICS:** This spirit is often seen desperately searching for his head, which he lost halfway through the 17th century. Along with this ghost, many other spirits live in this ancient castle: a cook, a woman thought to have been a witch during her lifetime, and even a dog. There are so many spectres that you may not be able to visit the castle without being bothered by at least one!

**HOW TO BEAT IT:** Since he can’t see you, he probably won’t know you’re there, so there’s nothing to fear. However, you may end up feeling sorry for him and decide to go looking for his head. Don’t do it! There are so many ghosts in this castle that you may find some of the ghastlier ones.

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**Loch Ness Monster**

**WHERE:** Loch Ness, Scotland

**CHARACTERISTICS:** The creature that lives in Loch Ness – sometimes called Nessie – is a rather curious monster. It has a massive body, a long snake-like neck, a tiny head, and fins. It’s good at swimming and is rumoured to be able to slither on dry land, too.

**HOW TO BEAT IT:** All the photos taken of Nessie show it swimming, so if you want a close encounter, you’ll need to board a boat. This isn’t a good idea though, because the monster is big and aggressive. Even if it hasn’t hurt anyone recently, in 565 AD, a monk wrote about the funeral of a man killed by the “loch monster”, which was the first reported sighting of Nessie. Better not risk it!

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**The Green Lady**

**WHERE:** Castle of Mey in Scotland

**CHARACTERISTICS:** The spirit that haunts this castle has been named the Green Lady. She looks like a sad little girl, and in fact, her death hides a tragic love story. If you meet her, give her a smile. It won’t change her fate, but it will certainly cheer her up.

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**The Witches of Pendle Hill**

**WHERE:** England

**CHARACTERISTICS:** There is a dark presence at the top of Pendle Hill. It’s believed to be the 12 ghosts of accused witches who once lived in the area, until they were executed. They are seeking revenge, so before trespassing on their land, make sure you have an amulet to protect yourself from their tricks.
IN THE ENEMY’S LAIR: You need a lot of mettle to go to Dracula’s castle. It’s elegant, with dark, period-style furniture, but also dismal, with heavy curtains to block out the sun. You may feel a little claustrophobic and want to run away. Trust your instincts: get out and never look back! If, on the other hand, you want to test your luck, go down to the crypt and find his coffin . . . but be careful, Dracula may come flying out and bite you.

BECOMING A MONSTER: If you are bitten by Dracula, you may die! It would be a fairly quick death, though, as he drank all the blood from your body. It could be worse: if he bites you without killing you, he may turn you into a vampire yourself. To avoid either of these fates, always carry some garlic and holy water with you.

WHERE: Bran Castle, Transylvania, by day. Flying around in the form of a bat by night.

CHARACTERISTICS: He is the most notorious of all vampires – nocturnal creatures that feed off of human blood. As an undead creature, he won’t be easy to kill. Pale, with long canine teeth used to suck the blood of his victims, he stays out of direct sunlight and can’t set foot in places that have been blessed. Although some vampires have recently reformed, don’t be fooled into thinking that Dracula has turned over a new leaf; quite the contrary. He is stronger, more devious and more violent than ever.

HOW TO BEAT IT: Even though Dracula is one of the strongest monsters, he is also more vulnerable in a few ways. He hates garlic, so always wear some around your neck, where he normally sinks his canines. If you find him asleep in his coffin, you could kill him easily by driving a wooden stake through his heart. Another, more complicated way to defeat him would be to lure him out of his castle and into the sunlight, where he would turn to dust. Also remember that he loathes holy water and the sign of the cross.
In ancient times, the very heart of Europe was Greece. Great thinkers such as Plato and Aristotle were born here, and Greece was known for its epic poems like the Iliad and the Odyssey.

This, however, is not a history book, but an ATLAS OF MONSTERS, so I will tell you all about monstrous creatures instead. This region is also highly noted for its fearsome and unforgettable native beasts!
**Bigfoot**

**WHERE:** The forests of North America

**CHARACTERISTICS:** Big and brawny, he's covered with thick black fur and looks a lot like a gorilla. Don't tell him that. He might get offended! He also has gigantic feet, which is why they named him Bigfoot. With exceptional strength, he can hurl you a mile away if he manages to grab you.

**HOW TO BEAT IT:** With speed and agility. Since this creature is strong but slow, you'll need to move quickly. If you just want to get away, simply run as fast as you can, and soon you'll lose him behind you. If you want to confront him though, just devise a good plan. Bigfoot is anything but smart!

**EXCEPTIONAL SIZE:**

- **Weight:** More than 30 stone. That's five children, more or less!
- **Height:** Three metres. Two children, standing one on top of the other.
- **Feet:** He leaves footprints that are longer than 60 centimetres. That's huge, considering an adult male's feet are around 40 centimetres.

**ROUND-THE-WORLD MONSTER:** We still have a lot to learn about Bigfoot, but one thing is certain: he tends to move around, always hiding in forests. As accounts of various sightings throughout North America show, he doesn't like to stay in one place for too long. From the hunter who first saw him in 1840 in California to the woman who stumbled across him in 2006 in Canada, he certainly gets around!