



Indigo Wilde had been awake since before the sun came up. She had already been out into the garden in her wellington boots to dig up buckets of worms for the flocks of magical birds, watered the man-eating plants and delivered bowls of slugs'-breath porridge, pickled bogey broth and scrambled eggs to the goblins, trolls and yetis.

Indigo had just put fresh hay in the basement for the llama-corn (who was on

a strict diet after eating half the contents of her mother's wardrobe), and was spooning snot-flakes into a baby troll's mouth, when the doorbell rang. Indigo's doorbell wasn't one of those nice musical ones you get in ordinary houses; it was a big rusty old clanger that made your teeth rattle in your head, so when it rang it made Indigo jump and spill the snot flakes down her T-shirt.

Scrubbing at the green slime with an old sock that had been drying limply on the radiator, she opened the door to the postman. He looked confused, as he often did when delivering to Indigo's house, and handed her two boxes before running pell-mell down the street, shrieking his head off. Indigo thought this was a *bit* of an overreaction – the biting daises on the front step had only taken a *tiny* chunk out of his shoe.

Indigo took the boxes into the kitchen, where Quigley was munching his way through his third jar of marmalade, dolloping great orangey blobs of it on his toast. She opened the smaller parcel and saw it contained several bars of exotic-looking chocolate.



Indigo sighed. She thought that chocolate tasted of old socks and mud, but her parents kept sending it as a souvenir from whichever crazy country they happened to be exploring and she didn't have the heart to tell them she didn't like it. The result was that she had a box in her bedroom bulging with chocolate treats – and she couldn't even invite her friends over to eat any of it, in case they got sat on by a dragon.

Quigley licked his lips. (Another perk of their parents being away a lot was being able to have chocolate for breakfast without any grown-ups telling him off.)

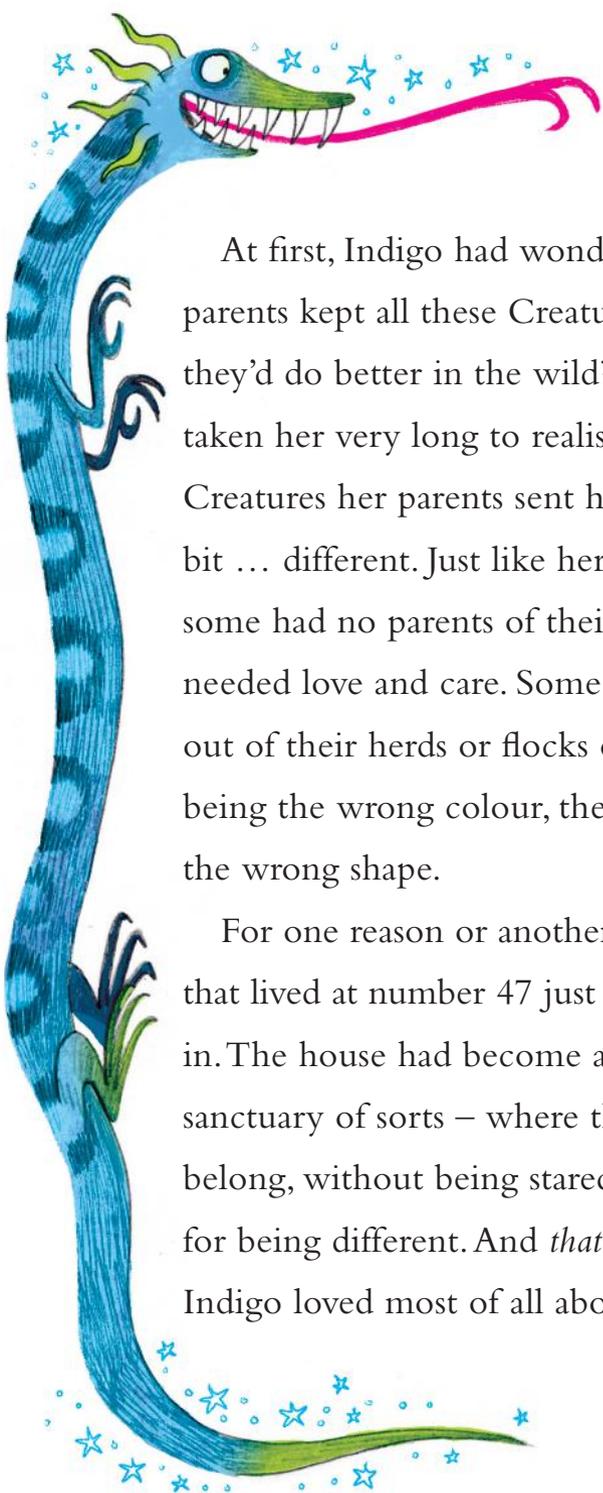
“Mum and Dad have sent us some Monster Mail, look!” Indigo said excitedly, showing Quigley the bigger box. It was made of metal with air holes in the lid and sides and had “DANGEROUS

CREATURE” and “HANDLE WITH CARE” and “FLAMMABLE”

stamped all over the outside.

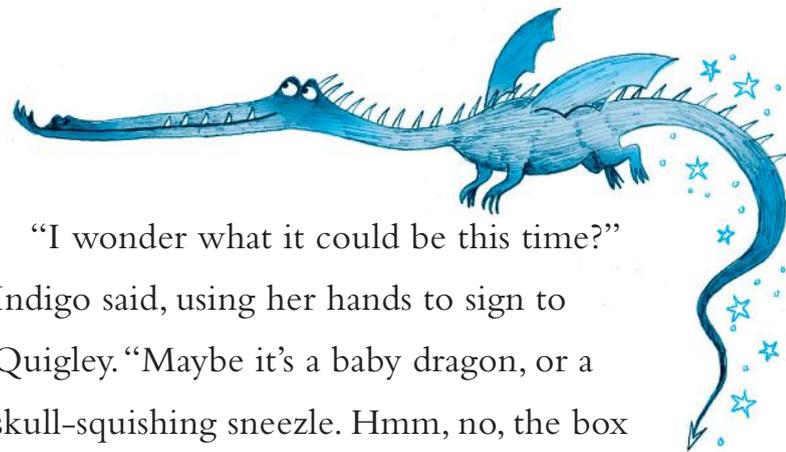
Philomena and Bertram often sent Creatures home via Monster Mail. The Creatures arrived in big boxes or crates. The problem was, they very rarely remembered to warn Indigo, so the deliveries always came as a bit of a surprise. Once Quigley had opened the front door to get the milk in and found a dragon sitting on the doorstep and the porch reduced to ashes.





At first, Indigo had wondered why her parents kept all these Creatures. Surely they'd do better in the wild? But it hadn't taken her very long to realise that the Creatures her parents sent home were all a bit ... different. Just like her and Quigley, some had no parents of their own and needed love and care. Some had been cast out of their herds or flocks or swarms for being the wrong colour, the wrong size or the wrong shape.

For one reason or another the Creatures that lived at number 47 just didn't fit in. The house had become a place – a sanctuary of sorts – where they could belong, without being stared at or bullied for being different. And *that* was what Indigo loved most of all about the house.



“I wonder what it could be this time?” Indigo said, using her hands to sign to Quigley. “Maybe it's a baby dragon, or a skull-squishing sneeze. Hmm, no, the box is too small. Reckon it's another flying monkey? Or a fairy?”

“RAAAAAR!” roared Quigley, gnashing his teeth, crossing his eyes and pretending to be a terrifying marmalade-dripping monster.

“Gosh, I hope not,” replied Indigo, laughing.



“I’ve got far too much stuff to do today without having a monster to look after. Let’s hope it’s something nice and quiet and *easy*.”

She heaved the lid open and peered inside. There was a pile of straw, a few crinkled, empty chocolate wrappers and half an envelope that looked like it had been



chewed by sharp teeth, but nothing else. No gnashing jaws, scratching claws or beady eyes. In fact, the only other thing in the box was a large hole straight out the other side.

“It’s chewed straight through the metal!” Quigley signed, sticking his head through the hole and pulling a grotesque face.

Indigo and Quigley looked at each other, worried. Whatever had been in the package was not there now, so it was probably either loose in the house, or loose in the post office. Indigo wasn’t sure which was worse ... She was fairly certain the postman’s nerves couldn’t cope with having a monster rampaging around his mail room but, on the other hand, she and Quigley had only just got the house sorted after their parents’ last special delivery.

Last month, Philomena and Bertram had

sent two yeti twins called Olli and Umpf. Indigo and Quigley had quickly made the yetis feel at home with large bowls of ice cream (with chocolate sauce, sprinkles and an eyeball on top). Unfortunately, the ice cream had given the yetis terrible brain freeze so Indigo and Quigley had spent the next two hours chasing the twins all over the house, trying to stop them smashing walls down in an ice-cream-fuelled frenzy.

Trying to shake off this unpleasant memory, Indigo picked up the scrap of envelope and saw it had her name on the front in her mother's handwriting. There were only a few tiny pieces of the letter left inside and they weren't very useful at all ...



Indigo crumpled up the scraps and sighed. Quigley shrugged with disappointment and went back to his marmalade. They would just have to hope this particular Creature had found its way back to wherever it had come from.