



Bizarre Creatures

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Introduction

There are many things for people to fear in this world. Car accidents, for example, kill thousands of people every year. The flu once wiped out millions worldwide. Lightning often strikes people during thunderstorms.

Yet, somehow, no one gets goose bumps over cars or bad weather or the flu season. We save our deepest shivers for things we can't even see. We fear the dark and "things that go bump in the night."

And all over the world, people turn fear of this type into stories. They make up monsters to explain the fears that make no

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sense. You may have shivered over such stories yourself. Perhaps you have heard tales of witches, ghosts, or werewolves. People in other places have their own monsters. Africans and Asians, for example, tell stories most Americans have never heard. Even in this country, different groups have different monster tales.

Get ready to meet six monsters from different lands. Compare them to monsters you have heard about. See if you think they are more scary or less so. Which ones would make good movies or television shows? Why or why not?

Demon Dogs



There is a famous story about a detective named Sherlock Holmes. It tells about a frightening demon dog. This dog is seen

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standing over a dead man, plucking at his throat. It has the shape of a hound but is the size of a small horse. Its jaws drip blood and blaze with a blue fire.

In the story, this monster turns out to be a fake. It is just a big dog. The blue fire is a special effect. Some crook has been using the dog to cover up his crimes. But don't relax just yet. The writer based this creature on stories he had heard about demon dogs. And such stories go way back.

Around the year 800 C.E., for example, a huge black dog prowled the dark woods of Germany. It was tearing people to

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pieces. A German lord named Frankenstein killed the thing. (He was not related to the Frankenstein of the monster stories.) In the battle, Frankenstein got a small scratch. That tiny scratch ended up killing the poor man.

Was he scratched by a dog with rabies? Rabies is a fearful disease carried by dogs and other mammals. It makes dogs act crazy: That's why dogs with rabies are called "mad dogs." Even a scratch from such a dog can pass on the illness. And in the old days, there was no cure for rabies. Almost everyone who got the illness died.

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But why was that dog so huge?

Perhaps it was not a dog after all. Perhaps it was a wolf. A black wolf with rabies—that would be very scary, demon or not.

There are other stories. In 1874, something started killing sheep in Ireland. It killed about 30 sheep a night. This thing did not eat the sheep. It just sucked out their blood through small cuts in their throats. The tracks of an enormous dog were found in the area. The creature itself was never seen. After a while, the killings just ended.

Then in 1905, the same kind of killings started up in Badminton, England.

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This time, farmers got together. They went out looking for a demon dog. They shot all the stray dogs they could find. It didn't help. Those stray dogs were not doing any harm. The killings were the work of some other creature. What creature? Experts said it could not be a dog. Dogs are not vampires; they do not suck blood. Dogs eat meat. Yet this creature was eating none of the meat of the sheep it killed. It was

just sucking them dry of blood.



This story has happened many times in many places. The pattern

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is always the same. Something starts killing sheep or cattle. The attacks go on for many nights. The animals are not eaten, but their blood is sucked out. The footprints of a giant dog are found near the killings. People look for the giant dog but find no trace of it. Then the killings stop, leaving people to wonder. What was that creature? Where did it come from? Where did it go?

The mystery has given rise to stories about werewolves. These are people who can change their shape. They look human most of the time. But on some nights they turn into wolflike creatures. Then they go out thirsty for blood. After they have

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killed enough animals and drunk enough blood, they change back to human shape. That's why they are never found.

Stories about wolf men don't just come from long ago. New reports keep turning up. It's hard to know what to make of a story from Lawton, Texas, for example. It was printed on December 27, 1971. According to this story, a police officer named Harry Ezell took almost 100 calls one night. The callers said that "something" was running down their streets. It was dodging between cars. It was hiding behind bushes, then leaping out to run again. It was scaring people.

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Many callers described this creature as a “wolf man.” They said it had hair over its whole face. They said it had hair on its hands and lower legs, too. It was wearing clothes, but the pants were too small. They were torn in some places. It looked as if the creature had grown since it put on those clothes.

A man named Donald Childs had a heart attack when he saw the wolf man in his yard. It was on its hands and knees, drinking from his fishpond. The thing stood up and turned. Childs saw that it was tall and had hair over its whole face. He felt faint. When he woke up, he was in the hospital.

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A woman saw the thing on her second-story balcony. She had no idea how it got up there. When she looked out, it jumped down. The ground was 17 feet down, but the creature landed with no problem.

“Something” was in Lawton that night, but what was it? We will never know. And most of us would rather not find out.

