

STITCH HEAD

NOW A
MAJOR
MOTION
PICTURE



GUY BASS

STITCH HEAD



To Ruth
For everything!
-GUY BASS

To Cath and Leni
-PETE WILLIAMSON

STITCH HEAD



Guy Bass
Illustrated by Pete Williamson

LITTLE TIGER
LONDON



A FOREWORD OF

WARNING

(in the form of a poem, writ a long time ago by someone more grotty olde than your nan)



*Tommy Trump, upon a bill,
Trumped a smell that made him ill.*

*Did his best to find a loo
Within the walls of Grotteskew.*

*In went Tommy through the gate,
And there he met his awful fate.*

*So if you feel a trump a comin'
Run back home to Grubbers Nubbin!*



WELCOME TO
GRUBBERS
NUBBIN

(POPULATION 665)

Yesteryear

PROLOGUE

A BETTER CLASS OF FREAK

(monsters, creatures
and mad things)

It was the night that everything changed.
The circus had come to Grubbers Nubbin.
Or rather –

**FULBERT
FREAKFINDER'S**

TRAVELLING CARNIVAL OF
UNNATURAL WONDERS

A MOST TERRIFYING VOYAGE

FOR THE MIND AND SPIRIT

TO A WORLD OF SUCH

UNFATHOMABLE ODDITIES

AS HAS EVER BEEN SEEN

– had come to Grubbers Nubbin.

“Roll up! Roll up and draw near, you brave souls of Chuggers Nubbin! Witness the most mind blowin’, stomach-churnin’, trouser-messin’ show on Earth! Fresh from our ... sell-out world tour!” cried Fulbert Freakfinder, atop his colourfully daubed horse-drawn carriage. He was handing out posters for his show to anyone who passed by. Three more curtain-covered carriages followed behind, trundle-clopping along the lamplit cobbles of the main street.

“Dare you gaze upon the impossible creatures lurkin’ behind these drapes? You’ll need all your nerve to behold these monsters! You’ll scream! You’ll gasp! You’ll wet your undergarments! Behold ... and be horrified!”

As a crowd gathered round the carriages, Freakfinder leaped down on to the cobbled street. He was distractingly short and round,

with legs so stick-thin they looked as if they might buckle under his weight. He wore a battered top hat and tailcoat, which, a long time ago, might have been rather splendid. He grinned as he pulled back the curtain on the first carriage. The carriage was a cage, and inside...

“Preeeesenting ... *Doctor Contortion*, the Human Knot! Watch in disbelief as he bends his body in impossible ways!” cried Freakfinder, pointing at a tall, stiff man trying desperately to get his foot behind his head.

“Stupid leg ... bend!” mumbled Doctor Contortion to his leg. “Everyone’s ... looking!”

“Moving along...” grunted Freakfinder, shaking his head. “Brace your breeches for *Madame Moustache*, the woman with the well-combed face!” Freakfinder pulled back the second curtain. Inside was a burly old woman with a horse’s tail glued to her chin.

“It pays the bills,” said Madame Moustache.

“And prepare to have your world turned upside down by the *Topsy-Turvy Twins!*” In the third cage were two tiny, wizened men, struggling to do handstands.

“Here come the cramps...!” said the men in unison, and immediately toppled over.

“Oh, cruel, cruel nature! Come closer, if your constitution can stand it! But try not to be sick on my shoes. Just sixpence a stare!” cried Freakfinder.

No one came closer.

Nor was there any screaming. Or gasping. In fact, no one so much as batted an eyelid. After a moment, the crowd carried on about their business.

Except for one untidy, wide-eyed girl ... who started to giggle.

“Your freaks ain’t scary,” she chuckled.

“Why, they ain’t even freaks!”

“Oh, you like to laugh at a fellow down on his luck, do you? Go on, clear off, you little snot, before I set the twins on you!” snapped Freakfinder. “Oh, blow it all to smithereens! What’s the point? It’s the same in every town – not so much as a trickle of nervous wee from anyone. What does it take to put a peculiar fear into folk these days? I’ll tell you what – I need to find me a better class of freak.”



“Sorry, boss,” said Doctor Contortion, now trying to get his foot to touch his chin. “We’re doing our best.”

“Your best has yet to be anythin’ but a disappointment, Maurice,” grumbled Freakfinder. “The fact is people just aren’t so easy to scare any more. Well, I’m not givin’ up! I’ve been in the horror-show business my whole life, and I’m not about to chuck it all in!”

“You were never going to scare us, anyway,” said the girl, who hadn’t cleared off in the slightest. “This is Grubbers Nubbin. Folk round here have got *plenty* to be scared of already.”

“Is that right? And what, pray tell, are they so afraid of?” asked Freakfinder.

Suddenly, a hideous, blood-freezing, gut-churning, “GROOOOWWaaOOO!”

filled the air. The townsfolk shrieked and

scattered in all directions, running into their houses and bolting the doors.

“*That*,” said the girl, pointing up into the darkness. There was a clap of thunder and a streak of lightning lit up the night sky. In the distance was a huge, dark castle atop a hill. Freakfinder felt a shiver run down to his toes and back up again as another heart-stopping roar came from the castle.

“Lugs and mumbles, what – what *is* that?” asked Freakfinder.

“*Monsters*,” whispered the girl, her dark eyes glistening like beads in the moonlight.



“Monsters? What monsters? What are you blitherin’ about?” asked Freakfinder.

“Folk say the castle’s *full* of them. We hear roaring and screaming ... and some reckon they’ve seen *things* atop the castle walls. *Not-human* things,” replied the girl. “The whole town’s *petrified* ... but not me. I ain’t scared of *nothing*.”

“Arabella! Come inside this instant!” screamed an old lady, darting out of a nearby house and grabbing the girl.

“Wait! Little snot! I mean, little girl! What is that place? Who lives there?” cried Freakfinder.

“That’s Castle Grotteskew! Home of Mad Professor Erasmus!” shouted the girl, as she was dragged inside. “He makes *monsters! Creatures! Mad things!*”

“Does he now?” muttered Freakfinder ... and an evil grin spread across his face like a disease.

THE FIRST CHAPTER

LIFE IN
CASTLE GROTTESKEW
(or something like it)



*Lucy, Lucy, good and true,
Went to Castle Grotteskew.
Thought she'd see what lurked inside,
But for her troubles, Lucy died.
Before she perished, she did say,
“Monsters! Creatures! Go away!”*



Around eighteen minutes before *Fulbert Freakfinder's Travelling Carnival of Unnatural Wonders* trundled into Grubbers Nubbin, Mad Professor Erasmus was in his laboratory, toiling on his latest experiment.

According to popular opinion, Mad Professor Erasmus was the maddest mad professor of all. He spent day and night in his laboratory, breathing life (or something like it) into any number of brain-meltingly strange creatures: steam-powered skulls, dog-faced cats, headless horses, flesh-eating chairs, frog-children – that sort of thing.

“Live... Live! Ah-ha-HA-HA! You shall be my greatest creation ever! And I really mean it this time!”

The professor always thought that his newest creation was bound to be his greatest ever. That is, until the next one came along.

For no sooner had he brought almost-life to a new creature, than he immediately lost interest and moved on to his next peculiar project.

“More power! Live, I say!” he cried, pulling levers and administering potions.

High up in the rafters, hidden in the shadows, a tiny figure watched as the professor created almost-life for the umpteenth time.

His name was Stitch Head.



Stitch Head was the professor's very first creation. He was a strange-looking something or other – more or less human-shaped, but no bigger than a medium-sized monkey, and made up of bits, pieces and spare parts that the professor had managed to find. His bald, round head was a patchwork of stitches, and his eyes were a different colour. While the left was a small, black bead, the right was large, bright and ice blue. This eye was a sight to behold. It almost seemed to glow in the castle's dimly lit corners.

“Yes, yes! Now we're cooking! *More power! More!* Now a little less ... now *more! More! MORE! Live!*” cried the professor again.

Over the years, Stitch Head had witnessed the “birth” of dozens of the professor's creations. And with each one, he was reminded how, once, he was the most important

creation in the professor's life ... that he and the professor had promised to be friends for the rest of their days.

But that was an almost-lifetime ago. Now, Stitch Head was long forgotten. He sighed as he watched this new monster open its giant, single eye for the first time.

“I have done it! I have created almost-life! Again! You are my *GREATEST CREATION EVER! YAH-AHAHA-HAHAHA!*” cackled the professor.

Stitch Head had to admit, the Creature was an impressive sight – far bigger and more imposing than anything the professor had created before. What's more, it had a near perfect balance of disgustingness and monstrosity. It flexed its two huge arms, pulling at the thick leather straps that held it in place – and wiggled a third, small arm

protruding from its chest, as its master shrieked with victorious glee. Stitch Head looked down at his tiny, mismatched hands, and felt sadder and more forgotten than ever.

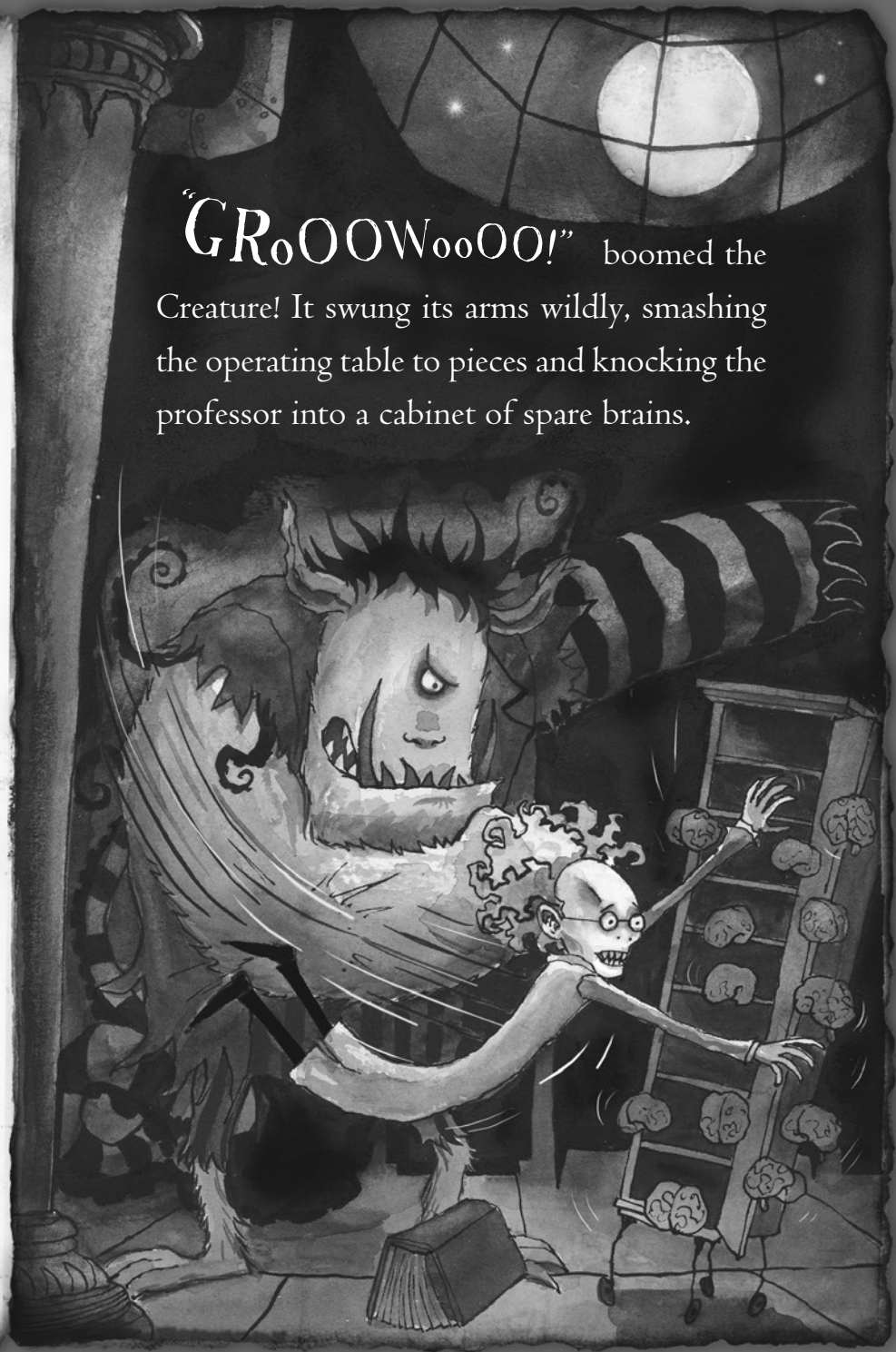
“GRoOOWooOO!”

Stitch Head watched as the Creature began thrashing about, its mighty arms straining against its bonds.

“What’s happening...?” he whispered, staring in horror as the Creature began to *grow*. Within seconds, it had all but doubled in size. It sprouted thick fur and its huge body grew ever larger, until, with a roar, it tore itself free and leaped from the operating table.

“Oh *no*,” gasped Stitch Head, tightening the straps on a small bag slung over his shoulder. He looked up to the laboratory’s great domed skylight – the moon was shining full and round in the midnight sky. “No! The *moon!*”

“GRoOOWooOO!” boomed the Creature! It swung its arms wildly, smashing the operating table to pieces and knocking the professor into a cabinet of spare brains.



“Master!” whispered Stitch Head, as the cabinet collapsed on top of the professor. The Creature lumbered towards the laboratory’s thick wooden door. With a single almighty lunge, it crashed through locks, bolts and four inches of solid oak. Then it roared again and disappeared into the labyrinth of corridors.

“What a creation! My best work ever! Ah-HAHAHA!” came a cry from underneath the cabinet of brains. Stitch Head breathed a sigh of relief as the professor emerged. He dusted himself off and picked a few bits of brain out of his hair.

“Creature? Creature! Return to your master, I command it!” called the professor.

It didn’t.

“I have to stop it from leaving the castle,” muttered Stitch Head, his eyes unblinking with fear. He clambered silently, nimbly along

the rafters, and then through a large wooden door and down a flight of winding stairs.

“Oh well – easy come, easy go!” said the professor, sifting through the brains on the floor. He held one up and gave it a good sniff. “Ah-HAHA! Perfect for my next experiment!”



In CASTLE GROTTESKEW

something **BIG**
is about to happen...

...to someone **SMALL.**

Join an eccentric professor's forgotten
creation as he steps out of the
shadows into the adventure
of an almost-lifetime...

Inside illustrations by Pete Williamson

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