

## When Daddy Fights the Monster

By Bill Wolfe

Daddy fought the monster, today, and he won. He came back to the hotel room smelly from sweat and French fries, but not like medicine. We went to the park and ate cold hamburgers with lots of lettuce and tomatoes and pickles. I giggled when he told me mine was just like a big old salad sandwich. Mommy says salad is good for me. Daddy always smiles when he wins his fight with the monster. He looks almost just like he did in the videos Mommy used to watch. Like he looked before he went off to fight the aliens when I was just a baby.

Today he was happy and he pushed me on the swing and caught me when I went down the big slide. He brought supper from the dive. That's what Daddy told the hotel man. He said that he was working in some dive down the street and so he would be able to pay him the money and we won't have to leave the hotel. I like dive food, but it's all we eat and sometimes I wish I had some oatmeal or corn like Mommy fixes. I would eat it all up and she would be proud.

I miss Mommy a lot. The monster got her and hurt her real bad. It hurt Aunt Cindy, too. Her head looked funny but she stopped making that whistley noise before we left, so Daddy said she would be okay. I hope they'll be back with us, soon. I think maybe the monster hurt them because they talked about it. Daddy says not to talk to anyone when he's at work. I just stay in the room, don't answer the door, and watch TV with the sound real low.

I feel better now that I know that the monster is a space alien. I'm five now, and I'm not as scared as I was. Someday Daddy will beat it up real bad and maybe kill it, like the army men did on TV. I'm glad I watched that show today, it helped me to understand some things.

Aunt Cindy told Mommy that the monster is called a Peety—Essdee, and Daddy brought it home from the war. But I think it probably followed him. Daddy must have been in the same war with the alien monsters from the show. He even still has his army helmet. It was in the back of the van when we ran away after the monster hurt Mommy. Today after the show, when Daddy was working, I put it on and pretended to fight aliens. It smells funny, like sand and smoke and that time the toilet burped all over the bathroom.

In the show the army men killed all the alien monsters when they wanted to destroy the world and maybe eat us. I know it's the same monsters Daddy fought because the army soldiers on TV were wearing the same kind of helmet that Daddy has. The monsters were scary looking and I think I understand why Daddy can't always fight the one that followed him home.

A Peety—Essdee might even be scarier. I saw it once, but I didn't tell Mommy or Daddy. I was only four, then, and didn't know. I heard Aunt Cindy tell Mommy that there was a monster in the house, and that she wasn't safe until it went away. Mommy said that Daddy could fight it, and that he wouldn't let it hurt her any more.

That night, at story time, I asked Daddy about the monster. He told me that there were no such things as monsters. Then he asked me who said there was one in the house and I told him what Aunt Cindy and Mommy said. He finished the story and patted my head and kissed me goodnight. And that night he didn't fight the monster, and it got in the house. Daddy drank his medicine from his secret place behind the garage, and the monster came inside and hurt mommy again.

Daddy didn't know that I wasn't asleep. On TV the alien monster had squirmy worm things on its face and big sharp teeth. They eat people but they don't take their clothes off and try to squish them like Daddy's monster does. They just scratch them with their claws to hurt them. The Peety—Essdee that Daddy tries to fight uses its fists and its feet.

And the really scary part is that it looks a lot like him.

The End