

Under a Mendip Moon

By Thomon Summer

'WHAT are you doing?' the boy asked, staring up at her.

'Why, I'm rolling up the road young lad, so I am,' she replied, pausing and turning her head, her one good eye fixing on the little human.

She saw his red trouser-things, and spikey hair that reminded her of a hedgehog she used to drink with, and an obvious question sounded a bell between her hairy, pointed ears. Should she break him for a snack?

The lad was making more squeaky sounds. Her craggy brows furrowed like hedgerows as she realised there was no real meat on the lad.

'What is it, little nugget?' she asked, in a voice that rumbled like a passing lorry.

'I'm saying, you can't do that!'

She frowned at this.

It was clear she could, 'cos she did. And clear as day, the lad must see the roll of road five, no six times his height she was ripping up. He can see my hands, can he not, she thought? Each fur-backed hand was bigger than a tractor, the blackened claw-like nails, harder than steel.

'You daft or like lyin' lad?'

Humans, did they all lie? Her old ma would say, you can eat their roads, but not their words.

But in one so young as this lad? She spat and carried on pushing.

'Why this road then?'

'Cos this is my land,' replied the monster. And added 'enough with the questions, or I'll put you in my gob and swallow you whole.'

The monster nodded to herself, grabbed the road-roll and with a twist, snapped it off. With practiced ease, she lobbed it in the air and swallowed it whole. All its two-lane width. And her great blue tongue lapped up the stony-aggregate crumbs that littered her face. Though she was a messy eater, plenty fell into the muddy trench she made. After a single, impressive belch, she kicked her booted foot under the torn edge of the road in front of her. Then with fingers and hands, began to roll up the road, all over again. As she heaved, the sky flashed, and she saw the lad was keeping pace with her. It would be dawn soon, and she'd

have to stop.

'Ain't you got a hole to go home to nugget?'

The lad made a face the monster couldn't read, and a sound, snif-snif, just like one of them dogs the humans all seemed to live with. He wiped the back of his sleeve across his eyes, then scrunched up his face, and said something she couldn't hear.

'What you sayin'?'

'I got a question. Don't eat me!'

The monster sighed and looked down the long stretch of road ahead she had yet to eat. Humans called this road the B3134, or Old Bristol Road. Old Bristol Road. Pah!

She saw a car ahead, but it didn't move. And parked at a funny angle too. A thought struck her as she looked back down at the lad. Better than the last.

'Alright, then nugget. Another.'

'How come I've never seen your kind before?'

The cold, dark, moonless night turned into Wednesday morning, and a warm, bright light ran ahead. The monster bent down, reached out her terrible hand and lifted the boy gently onto her broad, shaggy shoulder. Ahead of her lay a favourite three-road junction she'd not eaten since the previous spring. Smiling wide, her rows and rows of broken teeth flashed. And she chuckled for the first time in a century, raising her great arms wide and dancing a little jig. All the while the little boy gripped desperately to fur and spike, terrified he might slip and lose his new home. Unbeknownst to either monster or boy - the former couldn't care, and the latter never got the hang of his letters - stood a long building, its white-washed walls holding up the words: 'Castle of Comfort Inn.' Once it offered a mug of grog to the guilty and innocent, on the way from Wells to Gibbets Brow, where their necks were stretched until they died.

A few moments later, the monster and the boy Nugget vanished with the morning dew, leaving only a stretch of empty road and a single yellow car lying on its side, its broken windows catching the light like a forgotten monster's teeth.