

September, 2006

Hi Sue,

Thanks so much for your careful and creative editing – I think it all works so well now! Both Barbara and I got very excited about the serpent tail idea – that was so clever of you, and just right! Much more ‘organic’ in terms of the central plot, using that actual feature of the monster to create the tension. I think it’s much more powerful this way – hope you agree...


We deleted various lines as you indicated, and now the word count is much the same 2,346 words for Mixed-Up Monster. (is that less, even?) I didn’t take out the Lotus Blossom stuff however, but made it clearer that it was Much-to-Learn talking initially, which I hope stops the confusion. We felt it was important to have a bit more character development there with Lotus Blossom, who is often indignant and morally outraged – and I personally love the way, in movies or books, that the scary exciting plot is unfolding but there is someone there complicating its satisfactory resolution, making it all even more scary ultimately...

A few phrases and words we didn’t change, also, just because we felt the rhythm was right or the thing was a little more child-like that way, or more atmospheric...

Anyway, see what you think – but we both felt so pleased with that major change of the slithery serpent...

Let’s talk soon,

Best of wishes,

 x

‘Two heartbeats later, the Chimera glided down to its birth-place amongst the ruins of the workshop.

‘Safely back in the bushes, Wise-as-an-Owl flipped through the Book of Spells until he found the page he needed: *How to Destroy the Chimera*. Tashi tried to peep over his shoulder. It was too hard to read the ancient writing in the dusky light, so he turned to help Lotus Blossom. She was making Much-to-Learn as comfortable as she could with a sling and a splint.

‘Soon the old man lifted his head. “Yes, it’s quite straightforward. Once we get the ingredients from my library)”

‘Ah Chu choked. “Go back down there, do you mean?”

“Just give me a list,” Tashi said quickly. “I know where all your potions and mixing bowls are kept, Wise-as-an-Owl. I’m quick and light—it will be easier for me to clamber over all that wreckage. Look,” he went on, “it’s nearly dark and the Chimera has been quiet for ages. I’ll creep down and see if it’s asleep.”

‘Tashi wished he felt as brave as he had sounded. A droning noise greeted him as he drew near. He thought his pounding heart would surely wake the Chimera as he felt his way over the smashed walls and windows. The monster slept, eyes closed, wings furled amongst the wreckage. Only its great tail lay slowly twitching, gleaming through the grass.

‘Tashi tiptoed to the library in the main house where the moonlight poured through the windows, lighting up the shelves of beakers in its cold, eerie beam. Working silently, Tashi found the ingredients on his list, one by one, and put them into a large mixing bowl. He was almost finished when he heard something move behind him.

‘He stood, terrified, his insides churning. The sound came again, slithering towards him across the ground. The hairs on the back of his neck prickled. He looked down and saw something glittering in the moonlight, beside his heel. The tip of the monster’s tail!

‘Tashi tried to slow his breath, to make his hands still. Maybe the creature would think he was a statue, or a piece of wood. But the tail was sliding over his foot! He dug his toes into his boots. He imagined he was a tree, rooted to the ground. The serpent tail was heavy, like the weight of two men.