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Fiction

Excerpt from
MAMA SNAKE
by
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Mothman. Goatman. Snallygaster. Yahoo. Dwayyo. Snarly Yow ... The Appalachian Mountains are known to have more mysterious cryptids than anywhere else in the world. That means a creature what's been claimed but never proved to exist, I explain while Mama washes our supper dishes. Like Bigfoot, I tell her, or the Loch Ness Monster.

Now I'd be willing to believe there's Bigfeet, Mama says. I don't know 'bout no Neckless Monster, though. Seems to me, somethin' that big would of been caught!

I've always been into weird and unexplained phenomena and shit, which is how come I signed up for *Anthropology 202: Monsters, Myth, and Folklore* in the first place, aside from the requirement to take a social sciences elective. Don't get me wrong, I'm not like some kind of UFO conspiracy theorist. I consider myself to be an open-

minded skeptic. Like, my family has a lot of tales about things seen and heard in Jackson, about which I can't rightly say, having lived all my years thus far in the fifth circle of suburban hell that has sprung up from the erstwhile green and gently rolling countryside betwixt D.C. and Baltimore, some 250 miles from the Southwest Virginia hills that my mother roved as a girl. Then again, I've spent my share of time hiking and drinking and camping out in yonder hills, and I can attest there's *something* thither. I chose my class project, "Cryptids of Appalachia," because I effing love the mountains, and also because an effed-up thing happened to me there—remind me to tell you about it—and also because interrogating Mama about our family legends counts as fieldwork, for which Professor Gunnarsson bestows up to ten points extra credit. But mainly, I'm just curious to know more about the history of the Pettibone clan, and I've been wanting to write down some of Mama's cockamamie anecdotes before she up and croaks or goes senile or whatnot.

Where's Appalachia? Mama asks. We lived in the Blue Ridge!

END OF EXCERPT