

# The Daily Scourge

## FURY OVER MONSTER 'EXPERTS'

There was widespread fury today at reports that some so-called scientists will testify on behalf of the Rat-Monster at the Tribunal tomorrow.

The 'defence' intends to make the absurd claim that the subhuman creature from the darkness is actually a human being and should be spared extermination.

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### HELPLESS VICTIMS

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Members of the public were quick to condemn this move.

'How can we sleep safely when this hideous evil beast is still alive?' said Mrs Kitty Nettles, 38.

Mrs Nettles is a mother of six.

*Six adorable, helpless children. Children who might be victims of the ravaging fiend.*



*Mrs Kitty Nettles, 27, and her family sheltering in an emergency refuge from gigantic, marauding, evil hell-monster*

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### EVIL BEYOND BELIEF

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Parents' groups were forming protest committees last night.

'This monster is evil beyond belief,' said Mr Derek Pratt, 46. 'Something must be done to protect our kiddies from the monster demon from hell. The government are keeping him safe on purpose. It is a conspiracy to protect the criminal elements and put ordinary

innocent people into danger. If the government does not act to destroy this foul beast then we shall keep our children home from school indefinitely.'

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## RIOT OVER HUNCHED FIGURE

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A 500-strong crowd attacked a police station with bricks and stones after rumours spread that the Monster was inside.

'I saw this horrible hunched figure being taken in the

back,' said Mrs Glenda Brain, 57. 'It was entirely covered in a blanket but I knew it was the Monster. I just had a feeling.'

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## THE SCOURGE SAYS:

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If the government does not act soon there will be bloodshed and it will be their fault.

**KILL THE MONSTER  
NOW.  
BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE!**

'What you reading that tripe for?' said Joan. 'That ain't worth using to wipe your feet on, that rubbish.'

'No, listen,' said Bob. 'We been so busy we missed all this. It seems they found this rat-creature in the sewers, and they're going to put it on trial and decide whether or not to kill it.'

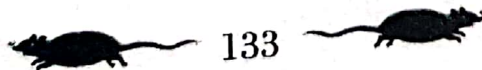
Joan realized what he meant.

'You don't think—' she began.

'No, it couldn't be,' he said reluctantly. 'But just suppose—'

'What's it look like?'

'Let's see,' said Bob, turning the page. 'Evil —





hideous – dangerous – vile – bloodthirsty – they don't say what it looks like . . .'

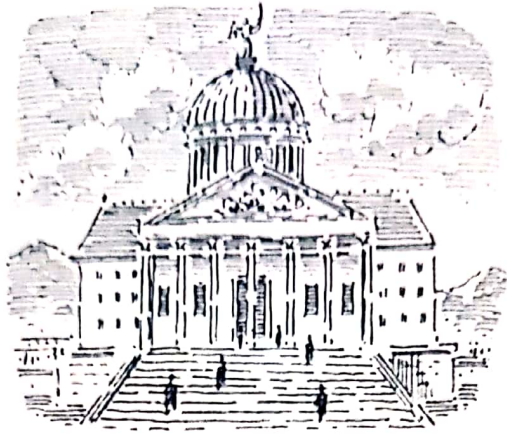
'He couldn't *change*, could he? The little one? He couldn't go back to being a proper rat?'

Bob was silent. 'We don't know as he ever was,' he said finally. 'He might have only thought it.'

'Bob, suppose it *is* Roger?' she said. 'And they're going to kill him!'

'Well, we'll have to go and stop 'em,' he said.





## NO ROOM

**T**he court building was crowded, and Bob and Joan had to struggle through packed corridors before they found the courtroom; and then they couldn't get in.

'Quite impossible,' said the usher outside the door. 'We been full up since seven o'clock this morning.'

'Please!' said Joan. 'We *got* to find out what this monster is!'

'So's ten thousand other people. Why should I let you in?'

'All right,' said Bob, 'here, take this. Here's a pound for you.'

'Get away!' the usher laughed. 'A *pound*? You're joking! *Fifty* pounds, and I might look the other way while you slip in at the back. There's some as gave me a hundred for a seat near the front. A *pound*? I'm insulted. Clear off.'



Bob would have had to go home on foot if the usher had taken the bribe, because it was all he had for the bus fare. Now he felt humiliated.

Joan said, 'There's no need to be rude, young man. What are all these people doing here if *they* can't get in?'

'Witnesses,' said the usher, and turned away to keep someone else out.

Joan tugged at Bob's arm and whispered, 'Those scientists must be here then – from the paper – the ones who are going to defend him . . .'

Bob unfolded the page he'd torn from the paper.

'Doesn't say their names, though,' he said.

'Perhaps we could find them,' she said hopefully.

The people in the corridor were arguing loudly and showing one another papers and diagrams and models of bones and skulls.

The door opened, and the usher called loudly:

'Mr Kelvin Bilge! Calling Mr Kelvin Bilge!'

One of the witnesses got up and followed him out.

'They must have started the trial,' said Bob.

He and Joan sat down unobtrusively near one of the loudest-arguing groups, and listened to what they were saying.

'—and it was surrounded by rats! Thousands of them!'

'—carry plague—'



‘—assistant swore she’d heard it say *thank you!* I ask you!’

Bob and Joan looked at each other.

‘—reflex vocalizations—’

‘—studies on the vocal tract of parrots—’

‘—particular fondness for pencils—’

Bob and Joan held each other’s hand tightly.

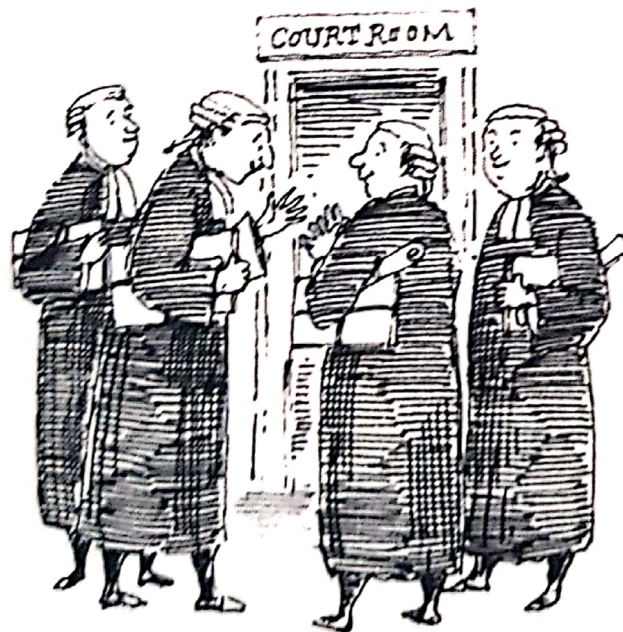
‘—of course the outcome’s all arranged already, they’re going to put it down—’

‘*Daily Scourge*—’

‘—I understand it sleeps curled up very small—’

Bob couldn’t sit still. Joan got up with him and they walked to the end of the corridor and back, unable to speak.

Then the door opened. The usher looked out and called ‘Mr Gordon Harkness! Calling Mr Gordon Harkness to the witness stand!’





No-one responded.

'Mr Gordon Harkness, please!'

Suddenly an idea came to Bob. He squeezed Joan's hand.

'Oh, sorry,' he called out. 'Mr Harkness, yes, that's me!'

'What are you *doing*?' Joan whispered.

'It's the only way to get in!' he whispered back.

'This way, please,' said the usher.

Bob tugged at Joan's reluctant hand. She was sure he'd be arrested for impersonation, and then they'd be in even more trouble, but he was just as solid and fearless as he ever was, and he said to the usher. 'This is my wife, Mrs Harkness. She's a witness too. I can't give me testimony without her. She's got to come in with me.'

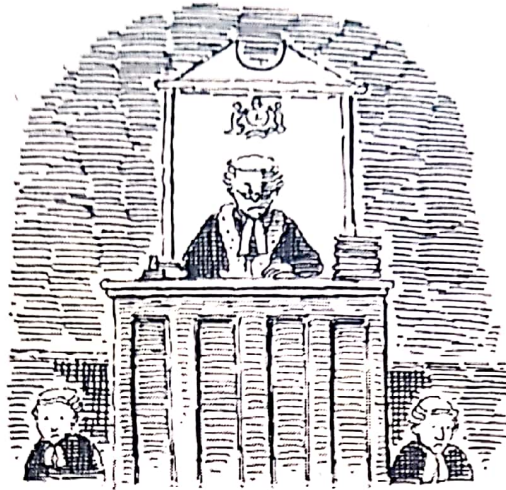
'She's not on my list,' said the usher.

'That's because she weren't available. She was away seeing her niece. But she is now, so she ought to be with me.'

'Oh, very well. I don't suppose it matters.'

And the usher showed them into the courtroom.





## THE TRIBUNAL

**T**here was a rustle of surprise all round the crowded court as Bob and Joan walked up to the witness stand together. Joan looked around nervously: there was a judge with a wig and a red gown, and rows of lawyers with wigs and black gowns, and what looked like hundreds of people crammed onto benches and standing at the back. To keep herself from trembling, Joan tried to count the seated ones and multiply by a hundred, and the standing ones and multiply by fifty, and add them together, to see how much money the usher had made.

As soon as Bob and Joan were on the stand, a lawyer stood up clutching his lapels and said, 'You are Mr Gordon Harkness, Lecturer in Comparative Anatomy?'



'No, I ain't,' said Bob. 'I'm Bob Jones, cobbler. And this is my wife Joan, washerwoman.'

'Then what are you doing here?'

'I had to pretend,' Bob went on, 'because you wouldn't have let us in otherwise. We got information about this so-called Monster that you ought to hear.'

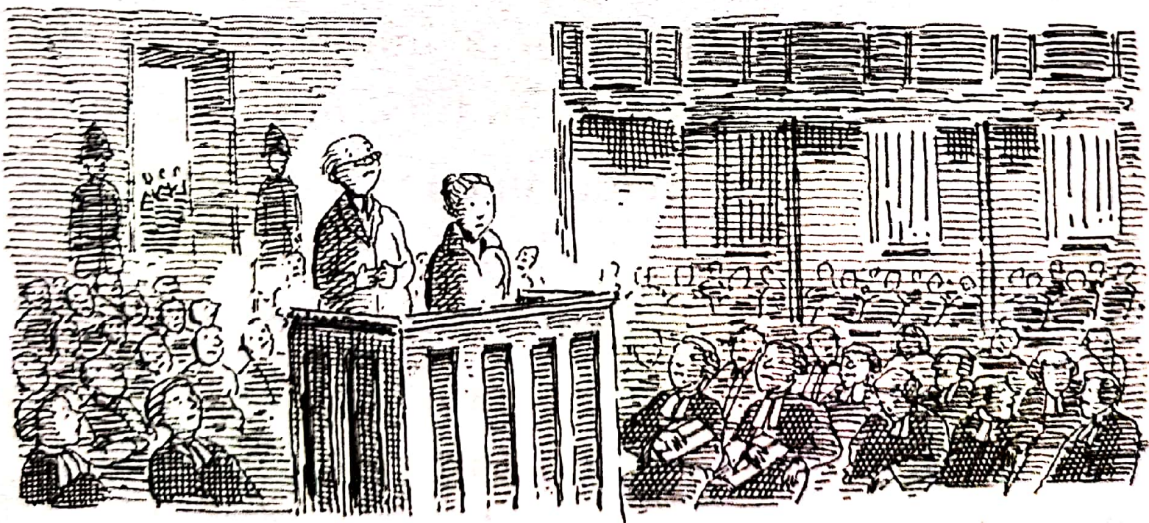
The crowd was buzzing with excitement and curiosity. Lawyers passed notes to one another, the reporters scribbled busily, and all the spectators were talking and pointing and standing up to look.

'Silence!' said the Judge. 'I will have order in this court room. If we don't have silence, I shall clear the court.'

Everybody suddenly stopped talking.

'Now, Mr Jones,' said the judge, 'if that is your name, you had better explain yourself. This is a serious matter.'

'All right, your lordship,' said Bob. 'You see, we





reckon that this Monster ain't a monster at all. It's a little boy called Roger. And all you need to do is just fetch him here and let everyone look at him, and if it is him, then we'll take him home and that'll be an end of it.'

'Is this Roger a relation of yours?' said the Judge.  
'A child or a grandchild?'

'Well, no.'

'Then what is your connection with him?'

'He just knocked on the door one night and we took him in,' Bob explained.

'Did you try to find out where he came from?'

'Yes.'

'Well, what did he tell you?'

'He said he'd been a rat,' said Bob unhappily.

The Judge glared at him.

'He did, Your Honour,' said Joan.

He glared at her too. Some of the people began to





whisper, and some began to laugh. The judge banged his gavel for silence.

‘And what did you do with this child?’ he asked.

‘We took him to the police, to the hospital, to the City Hall, and none of ’em wanted him. We sent him to school and all they did was thrash him. Then a gentleman called the Philosopher Royal called and took him away for some tests, and he frightened the boy and he ran away. Since then we been looking all over for him.

‘And every time we nearly found him, something happened and he ran off somewhere else. He’s a friendly little feller but he’s very easy to mislead. And when we heard of this Monster nonsense we thought we should come along, in case they exterminated him by mistake.’

‘I see,’ said the Judge. ‘Is the Philosopher Royal due to attend as a witness?’

‘Tomorrow, my lord,’ said the Clerk of the Court.

‘Send for him now,’ said the Judge. ‘Mr and Mrs Jones, you did a wrong thing in deceiving the court. Nevertheless, I accept that you acted for what you thought were good reasons, and I direct that you shall be found room to sit and listen to the rest of the tribunal. But whether you are called again to the witness stand depends on my judgement.’

‘Thank you, my lord,’ said Bob.

The usher led them to a bench at the front and made everyone else squeeze up, which led to a lot of grumbling.

By this time the real Mr Harkness had arrived, and he was brought in next. He had examined the Monster, he claimed, and discovered all kinds of ways in which it was non-human. He showed the court diagrams and charts and mathematical tables, and proved by the use of chemical analysis and statistical spectroscopy that the Monster was an unknown and dangerous life-form.

Bob began to fidget. Joan nudged him to keep still.

The next witness was someone surprising: none other than Mr Tapscrew. Bob sat up and clenched his fists.

'You are the proprietor of a fairground exhibition?' said the lawyer.

'I am, sir, and proud to be so,' said Mr Tapscrew.

'Please tell the court of your involvement with the Monster.'

'I have had long experience with the freak trade, my lord. I have exhibited numerous natural wonders, from the famous Sumatran mermaid to the Boneless Wonder of Mexico.'

'Now I don't need to explain to you sophisticated ladies and gentlemen that much of the business of a fairground exhibition is in the nature of light-hearted



make-believe. My mermaid, for instance – well, whether there's mermaids in the sea I couldn't say, but this one was a girl called Nancy Swillers, and her tail was run up out of satin and sequins by my good lady wife. Mind you, we did good business with her; the patrons got their money's worth, Nancy got a wage, everyone was satisfied.

'But I'm always on the lookout for new and unusual exhibits to set before the public, my lord. And when I heard of a new kind of a monster, half child, half rat, I set out to find it. And—'

'One moment, Mr Tapscrew,' said the judge. 'Where did you hear of this phenomenon?'

'In the saloon bar of a pub called the Black Horse, if I remember right,' said Mr Tapscrew. 'I was passing the time of day, and someone happened to mention that he'd heard tell of a creature very like a child, only different, really a rat, in fact, being looked after or concealed by some neighbours of his. And this creature would gnaw its way through anything – it was wild, it was dangerous, it was probably carrying all kinds of diseases – he wasn't happy about living next to it.'

'Charlie,' muttered Bob.

'Sssh!' said Joan.

'Well, following on from this,' Mr Tapscrew went on, 'I made enquiries and began to investigate, and

being a determined and experienced investigator, I soon found the creature in question.'

'Did you take it back to its carers? These neighbours you mentioned?' asked the lawyer.

'No. The fact was, I didn't know this man's name, the chap in the pub, and I forgot where he'd told me he lived. So—'

'I thought you said you were an experienced investigator,' said the Judge.

'You're quite right, my lord,' said Mr Tapscrew cheerfully, not a bit put out. 'So I did. But it was very late at night when I found it, and the rat-creature itself seemed to form an attachment to me. Anyway, he wouldn't leave me, and I took him home out of pure charity and my good lady wife gave him a meal and as we watched him eat, the idea came to me of exhibiting him as an educational display.'

'So we went to great expense to fit out a wagon full of all the most comfortable surroundings, and made sure he had the most varied food, and opened it up to the serious-minded and discerning public.'





‘And I have to say, my lord—’ here Mr Tapscrew took out an enormous handkerchief and blew his nose vigorously, ‘—I have to say we became quite attached to the creature, very fond indeed. It would curl up at our feet of an evening and take food from our hands, and we even taught it a few words.’

He dabbed his eyes, ‘But nature will out, my lord,’ he said sadly. ‘You can take the beast into your home, but you can’t make him human. One day the creature treacherously gnawed through the side of his wagon and escaped, and we haven’t seen him from that day to this.’

Bob could hardly contain himself. Every muscle in his body was twitching to get up and punch Mr Tapscrew on his lying nose, but he knew that if he did that he’d be thrown out, and Joan was squeezing his hand so tight her nails were digging into his palm.

‘From your first-hand observations of the creature,’ the lawyer was saying, ‘did you draw any conclusions as to its nature?’

‘Yes,’ said Mr Tapscrew. ‘For all his mimicking, he wasn’t human. There was a definite scaliness about him. He was covered in scabs and pustules. I dread to think of the health risks, but my dedication to science is so great that I didn’t worry about it. And his gnawing: that was the give-away. Just exactly like a giant rat. That and the pustules.’

‘And from your experience, Mr Tapscrew, would you say that a creature of this sort could be successfully tamed?’

‘No, sir, it could not. As a young one, what you might call a cub or a puppy kind of thing, it might display signs of human-style behaviour and even affection. But let ’em grow up and feel their strength, and soon they start growing wild. They want to dominate, you see, they won’t be tamed. They ain’t like your dogs, or your cats, what are proper domesticated pets. This is a wild and ferocious creature. Just let it get big enough and nothing’ll stop it from tearing your throat out and chewing it up before your very eyes. With relish,’ he added with relish.

‘And you have no idea what happened to the Monster after it escaped?’

‘None, your worship.’

‘What are you exhibiting at the moment, Mr Tapscrew?’

‘A very fine and unusual display, if I may say so, your lordship. Serpentina the Snake Girl. Half snake, half human, this lithe and sinister creature displays her uncanny—’

‘Is she genuine? Or is she like your mermaid?’

‘Aha, you’re no fool, I can see that. No,’ said Mr Tapscrew jovially, ‘she’s a bit of light-hearted



amusement. Half price today, ladies and gentlemen! Half-price admission to the Snake Girl during the trial—'

'Thank you, Mr Tapscrew. You may stand down.'

As Mr Tapscrew left the witness stand, he handed out leaflets to the nearest people, until he saw Bob and Joan glaring at him. Then he looked the other way, and hurried out.

The usher was handing the Judge a note. The Judge read it, and said, 'Very well. Call him in next.'

The usher went out, and Bob muttered, 'The longer they talk, the worse it gets! They oughter just bring the little feller in and put him on the stand, and then everyone'd see he ain't a monster!'

'I don't think they will,' Joan whispered back. 'The longer it goes on, the more silly they'd look if they did. They just can't afford to now.'

The usher came to the court and announced, 'Dr Septimus Prosser, the Philosopher Royal!'

'Ah, they're all coming out the woodwork now,' said Bob under his breath, as the Philosopher Royal took the stand.

'What are your duties, Dr Prosser?' the lawyer began.

'His Majesty the King is a very gifted amateur philosopher. I have the honour to serve as his personal philosophical adviser.'

‘Could you tell the court of your involvement with the Monster?’

‘By all means. It came to my attention that there was a child who claimed he had been a rat. I was curious, so I traced the child and conducted some tests.’

Here the Philosopher Royal took some papers out of a briefcase and put on a pair of glasses.

‘I found,’ he went on, ‘a remarkable degree of dissociation and denial, paranoid in nature. The creature’s cognitive development was abnormally retarded . . .’

Bob was grinding his teeth. The Philosopher Royal talked smoothly on, explaining, demonstrating, defining, and Roger seemed to become less and less real, until he was only a word among a lot of other words.

Eventually the Judge interrupted, ‘Dr Prosser, let me see if I understand you clearly. You maintain that the creature is essentially a rat, and not essentially a human?’

‘Quite so, my lord. The intrinsic nature of the creature is such that there is no moral continuum between it and ourselves.’

‘Again, let me try to clarify this. You maintain that we, as human beings, have no moral responsibility to this creature? It is not human, and therefore we



should treat it as we might any kind of vermin?’

‘Yes, that is the case.’

Bob could stand it no more. He stood and shook his fist at the Philosopher Royal, and roared, ‘You never treated him proper, you old fraud! You broke your word to us and you let him run away! Damn all this fancy talk! He ain’t a monster or a creature or a rat or any kind of vermin – he’s a little boy!’

The Judge was banging on the bench, the usher was hurrying towards Bob, two policemen were rushing in to help.

As they seized Bob’s arm he shouted: ‘Bring him to the court! Let ’em all have a look! Listen to him speak! Then you’ll see! He’s a little boy! He’s human! He’s like us! Bring him out and have a look at him!’

But they’d got him to the door by this time. Joan cried out to Bob that she was coming with him, but no-one could hear in all the confusion. People were shouting, jeering, laughing, standing on the benches to get a better look. It was the most exciting day in court for years.



TRUTH

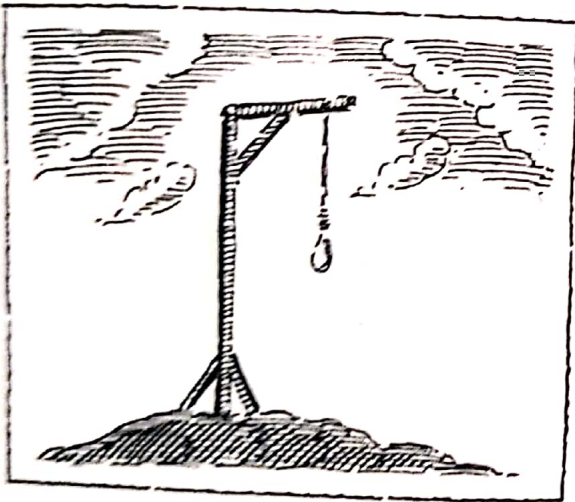
# The Daily Scourge

## MONSTER CONDEMNED

The Monster of the Sewers is to die – official!

Yesterday, after sensational scenes at the Tribunal, the decision was handed down by the learned judge: **KILL THE FOUL BEAST.**

The Monster will be exterminated tomorrow.



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## CELEBRATIONS

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There were wild scenes of joy outside the court when the verdict was announced.

Parents who had been keeping their children away from school celebrated with fireworks and street parties.

Seventy-eight people were injured, five of them seriously.

*Our Philosophy Correspondent writes:*

It was the testimony of Dr Prosser, the Philosopher Royal, that made the difference. **READ HIM TODAY,** only in the *Daily Scourge.*

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## THE PHILOSOPHER ROYAL SPEAKS – ONLY IN THE SCOURGE!

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**Don't believe in what  
you see!**

*by Dr Septimus Prosser*

Wise men and women throughout the ages have said this again and again: appearances are deceptive.

It's not what something looks like on the surface that counts.



It's what lies underneath.

The Monster of the Sewers may look like a little child. He may have the appearance of a normal nine-year-old boy.

*But how often have we been deceived by looks?*

Our senses are limited things. We see very little compared to birds of prey. Next to bats, we're almost deaf. And as for the sense of smell, Fido and Rover have got us well beaten in that department.

**SO WHO IS TO SAY THAT WE SHOULD TRUST THE APPEARANCE OF THIS CREATURE?**

His true nature is what matters. Hidden, secret, dark, deceptive. A cesspool of wild appetites. That's the real truth of the matter.

Then there are those who ask what the Monster has 'done wrong'.

As if that matters!

Wrongness is in his very nature. It's what he is that matters, not what he does.

Philosophy says: **Don't trust your senses. The truth is not what you see. It's what you don't!**

