

Dy Duyên

Things you use to fill a hole



Illustrated by Thanh Vũ - Translated by Jack Frogg

(For readers age 7+)

KIM DONG PUBLISHING HOUSE



I

Mom told me it is rude to stare at people, but I just couldn't look away. There he sat, about ten metres from where we were, on the slate stone floor of the park, next to an empty bench he could not fit on. He was about four metres tall and weighed... I could not tell. I was eleven and did not know how to gauge weight just by looking, but from the *Animal Planet*



I watched the week before, I knew elephants weighed from two to seven tonnes, which means he must also have weighed that much.

The first time I saw monsters, I was in the countryside, in the cornfield behind my grandparents' house. I was six, harvesting corn with Grandpa when I saw them: three monsters

approaching from the distant forest outskirts. Their footsteps were soft and gentle, making no sound at all. Slowly they drifted, like tufts of cloud, on the road out front. They passed by without looking at us but somehow, I knew that they were always alert, aware of everything.

Something in their gigantic silhouettes, in the vast shadows they cast on the ground, in their poised manner, kindled in me a pure feeling as if I was standing in front of an ancient mountain. Not the kind of mountain crowded with tourists that my parents took me climbing every spring. But the one that Grandpa and I visited in the summer of my eighth year on Earth. A mountain nested in a forest, desolate, tranquil, a place that brought me to a distant past, so distant I could not grasp, and at the same time made me feel that I was a part of this world, of this timeline, more so than ever.

Grandpa felt the same way. It was he who explained to me the naïve, overflowing, explosive feeling that we had when looking at the mountain and the monsters. We had those feelings because both the mountain and the monsters were pure and ancient beings

belonging to mystical Mother Nature, far from the chaotic and ever-changing world that humans created and lived in. Both were lullabies, myths, the life we saw in babies' eyes when those eyes could not yet tell colours apart.





But those exceptional emotions the six-year-old me experienced on that cornfield didn't stir when I stood looking at the monster sitting in front of me. He sat there, shoulders slumped, amidst the boisterous Sunday crowd. That huge form was as quiet and isolated as monsters tended to be, yet also familiar to me, terribly and strangely so, making me jittery and restless.

Once again Mom gently tugged at my hand, urging me. Reluctantly I followed, though my head still turned, my eyes lingered.

