**The  Fog Horn**

*by Ray Bradbury*

Every night MacDunn and Johnny waited for the fog. When it came, they lit the fog light in the lighthouse. Red, then white, then red again. They sent the light to the ships out in the sea but when the fog was too thick they switched on their Fog Horn!

One cold November evening they were having a quiet talk about their job, about the mysteries of the sea. The great eye of the light was shining into the sea. The Fog Horn was blowing once every fifteen seconds.

‘One night,’ said MacDunn, ‘years ago, I was here alone. Suddenly the fish came up. Something made them swim up. When I saw their funny eyes, I turned cold. They were like a big peacock’s tail in the moonlight. Then, without a sound, they disappeared. Strange. Think how the lighthouse must look to them. It stands high above the water, the light comes out from it, and the tower speaks in a monster voice…’

Johnny was frightened. He was watching the grey sea going away into nothing and nowhere.

‘Oh, the sea’s full of life,’ he said.

‘Yes, it’s an old world,’ MacDunn looked worried. ‘Now, I’ve got something to tell you. The Fog Horn sounds like an animal, doesn’t it? A big lonely animal crying in the night. Calling out to the Deep, ‘I’m here, I’m here.’ Well, you have been here for three months, Johnny, so I’m going to tell you. Something comes to visit the lighthouse.’

‘Do you mean the fish?’

‘No, something else. First it happened three years ago. It usually happens about this time of the year. Let’s wait and watch.’

While they were waiting, MacDunn told some theories about the Fog Horn to Johnny.

‘One day a man walked along the cold shore. Then he stopped and said, «We need a voice to call across the water to the ships. I’ll make one like a voice of the fog. I’ll make a sound that’s so lonely that everybody listens to it. Everyone who hears it will start crying, and their hearts will become warmer.» I made up that story to ex­plain why it keeps coming back to the lighthouse. The Fog Horn calls it, I think, and it comes…’

It was a foggy night and the light was coming and going, and the Fog Horn was calling through the air. In the high tower they watched the sea moving to the dark shore. And then, suddenly from the cold sea came a large dark head, and then a neck. And then more neck and more! The head was high above the water on a beautiful dark neck. Finally came the body, like a little is­land of black coral.

‘It’s impossible!’ said Johnny.

‘No, Johnny, we’re impossible. It has always been. It hasn’t changed at all!’

The silent monster was swimming slowly in the icy water with the fog around. One of its eyes caught the bright light of the tower, red, white, red, white.

‘But the dinosaurs died out long ago!’ Johnny cried.

‘No, they hid away in the Deep.’

‘What should we do?’

‘We’ve got our job. We can’t leave it. Besides, we’re safe here.’

‘But here, why does it come *here’*

The next moment Johnny had his answer. The Fog Horn blew. And the monster answered. A cry so sad and lonely! The Fog Horn blew. The monster cried again. The Fog Horn blew. The monster opened its great toothed mouth and the sound that came from it was the sound of the Fog Horn itself. It was the sound of unhappiness, of a cold night.

‘Imagine, all year long,’ whispered MacDunn, ‘that poor monster waits, deep in the sea. Maybe it’s the last of its kind. Think of it, waiting a million years! One day it hears the Fog Horn in his deep hiding-place. The sound comes and goes, comes and goes. Then the monster starts its way up to have a look at it. He does it very slowly because the heavy ocean is on its shoulders. It goes up and up for three autumn months and it can hear the voice better and better. And there it is, in the night, Johnny! And here’s the lighthouse. The monster can see that the lighthouse has got a neck as long as its neck, and a body like its body, and, most important of all, a voice like its voice. Do you understand now, Johnny?’

The Fog Horn blew. The monster answered. It was only a hundred yards off now.

‘That’s how it happens,’ said MacDunn. ‘You love some­thing more than that thing loves you. And one day you want to destroy it, because it hurts you.’

The monster was swimming to the lighthouse. The Fog Horn blew.

‘Let’s see what happens,’ said MacDunn and switched the Fog Horn off.

It was a minute of silence and the men could hear their hearts. The monster’s eyes looked into the dark. Its mouth opened. It sounded like a volcano.It turned its head to the right and then to the left. It looked for the Fog Horn, for its deep sounds. Then its eyes caught fire. It swam towards the tower, its eyes filled with anger.

‘MacDunn!’ Johnny cried. ‘Switch on the horn!’

MacDunn switched the horn on and they saw its fish skin. It hit the tower with its gigantic paws and the tower shook.

MacDunn cried, ‘Downstairs! Quick!’

They ran down and hid in a small room at the bot­tom of the lighthouse. The next moment they heard the rocks raining down. The lighthouse fell. There was noth­ing but darkness and the wash of the sea on the stones. And then they heard the monster’s cry. There was no tower and no Fog Horn — the thing that had been call­ing to the monster for so many years. And the monster was opening its mouth and sending out great sounds. The sounds of a Fog Horn, again and again. And so it went for the rest of that night. The next morning the people came and helped them to get out of the ruins.

‘It was a terrible storm,’ said Mr. MacDunn. ‘We had some bad knocks from the waves and the tower fell.’

The ocean was quiet and the sky was blue. The lighthouse was in the ruins. The monster? It never came back. It returned back to the Deep. It learned you can’t love anything too much in this world.

**Mr. Sticky**

*by Mo McAuley*

No one knew how Mr. Sticky got in the fish tank.

"He's very small," Mum said as she peered at the tiny water snail. "Just a black dot".

"He'll grow," said Abby and pulled her pyjamas bottoms up again before she got into bed. They were always falling down.

In the morning Abby jumped out of bed and switched on the light in her fish tank.

Gerry, the fat orange goldfish, was dozing inside the stone archway. Jaws were already awake, swimming along the front of the tank with his white tail floating and twitching. It took Abby a while to find Mr. Sticky because he was clinging to the glass near the bottom, right next to the gravel.

At school that day she wrote about the mysterious Mr. Sticky who was so small you could mistake him for a piece of gravel. Some of the girls in her class said he seemed an ideal pet for her and kept giggling about it.

That night Abby turned on the light to find Mr. Sticky clinging to the very tiniest, waviest tip of the pond weed. It was near the water filter so he was bobbing about in the air bubbles.

"That looks fun," Abby said. She tried to imagine what it must be like to have to hang on to things all day and decided it was probably very tiring. She fed the fish then lay on her bed and watched them chase each other round and round the archway. The snail floated down to the bottom of the tank among the coloured gravel.

"I think he's grown a bit," Abby told her Mum at breakfast the next day.

"Just as well if he's going to be gobbled up like that," her Mum said, trying to put on her coat and eat toast at the same time.

"But I don't want him to get too big or he won't be cute anymore. Small things are cute aren't they?"

"Yes, they are. But big things can be cute too. Now hurry up, I'm going to miss my train."

At school that day, Abby drew an elephant. She needed two pieces of expensive paper to do both ends but the teacher didn't mind because she was pleased with the drawing and wanted it on the wall. They sellotaped them together, right across the elephant's middle. In the corner of the picture, Abby wrote her full name, Abigail, and drew tiny snails for the dots on the 'i's. The teacher said that was very creative.

At the weekend they cleaned out the tank. They scooped the fish out and put them in a bowl while they emptied some of the water. Mr. Sticky stayed out of the way, clinging to the glass while Mum used the special 'vacuum cleaner' to clean the gravel. Abby trimmed the new pieces of pond weed down to size and scrubbed the archway and the filter tube. Mum poured new water into the tank.

"Where's Mr. Sticky?" Abby asked.

"On the side," Mum said. She was busy concentrating on the water. "Don't worry I was careful."

Abby looked on all sides of the tank. There was no sign of the water snail.

"He's probably in the gravel then," her mum said. "Come on let's get this finished. I've got work to do." She plopped the fish back in the clean water where they swam round and round, looking puzzled.

That evening Abby went up to her bedroom to check the tank. The water had settled and looked lovely and clear but there was no sign of Mr. Sticky. She lay on her bed and did some exercises, stretching out her legs and feet and pointing her toes. Stretching was good for your muscles and made you look tall a model had said on the tv and she looked enormous. When Abby had finished, she kneeled down to have another look in the tank but there was still no sign of Mr. Sticky. She went downstairs.

Her mum was in the study surrounded by papers. She had her glasses on and her hair was all over the place where she'd been running her hands through it. She looked impatient when she saw Abby in the doorway and even more impatient when she heard the bad news.

"He'll turn up." was all she said. "Now off to bed Abby. I've got masses of work to catch up on."

Abby felt her face go hot and red. It always happened when she was angry or upset.

"You've hoovered him up haven't you," she said. You were in such a rush you hoovered him up."

"I have not. I was very careful. But he is extremely small."

"What's wrong with being small?"

"Nothing at all. But it makes things hard to find."

"Or notice," Abby said and ran from the room.

The door to the bedroom opened and Mum's face appeared around the crack. Abby tried to ignore her but it was hard when she walked over to the bed and sat next to her. She was holding her glasses in her hand. She waved them at Abby.

"These are my new pair," she said. "Extra powerful, for snail hunting." She smiled at Abby. Abby tried not to smile back.

"And I've got a magnifying glass," Abby suddenly remembered and rushed off to find it.

They sat beside each other on the floor. On their knees they shuffled around the tank, peering into the corners among the big pebbles, at the gravel and the pondweed.

"Ah ha!" Mum suddenly cried.

"What?" Abby moved her magnifying glass to where her mum was pointing.

There, tucked in the curve of the archway, perfectly hidden against the dark stone, sat Mr. Sticky. And right next to him was another water snail, even smaller than him.

"Mrs.. Sticky!" Abby breathed. "But where did she come from?"

"I'm beginning to suspect the pond weed don't you think?"

They both laughed and climbed into Abby's bed together, cuddling down under the duvet. It was cozy but a bit of a squeeze.

"Budge up," Mum said, giving Abby a push with her bottom.

"I can't, I'm already on the edge."

"My goodness you've grown then. When did that happen? You could have put an elephant in here last time we did this."

Abby put her head on her mum's chest and smiled.