

A Depiction of Hallucination in Patrick Ness's *A Monster Calls*

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Abstract

A Monster Calls is an intrusion fantasy novel, written for young adults by Patrick Ness, elucidated by Jim Kay and published by Walker in 2011. The story basically about hallucination and denying the reality, set in modern-day England, featuring a boy who strives to cope up with the significances of his mother's illness. He is frequently visited by a monster in the middle of the night who tells stories. In his hallucination it helps him to oppress his distress and face the reality and, in the end, the lone parent brought up boy, recognizes his mom's impending death. The monster assures to stay with him until the end, and he cries, knowing that the end is very near. His family is shattered, which adds to the strain of watching his mother death. He wants to live with his father, but his father is not ready to take him in. He is influenced that he will not be able to sufficiently care for Conor.

Keywords: Nightmare, Single Mother, Monster, Stories, Family, Night, Death.

Patrick Ness is a British-American author known for his compelling young adult fiction. Born on October 17, 1971, in the United States, he grew up in Hawaii and Washington before moving to London. He initially pursued his career as a corporate writer but later transitioned to writing novels. He gained widespread acclaim for his Chaos Walking trilogy, consisting of *The Knife of Never Letting Go* (2008), *The Ask and the Answer* (2009), and *Monsters of Men* (2010), which won several awards including the Guardian Children's Fiction Prize and the Carnegie Medal.

Ness continued to captivate readers with works like *A Monster Calls* (2011), which was based on an idea by Siobhan Dowd and won numerous awards, including the Carnegie Medal and the Kate Greenaway Medal. He also authored *More Than This* (2013), *The Rest of Us Just Live Here* (2015). In addition to his novels, he has contributed to various anthologies and written for stage and screen. His works are known for their emotional depth, complex characters, and exploration of profound themes such as grief, identity, and the nature of humanity. Patrick Ness continues to be a prominent voice in contemporary young adult literature.

Patrick Ness's novel *A Monster Calls* details the story of Conor O'Malley, a 13-year-old boy who is dealing with his mother's illness. Her impending death hangs over the bulk of the book, and

Conor must look at his own feelings through stories to find peace in her passing and how he feels about it. The Monster, basically in his Hallucination, birthed from the yew tree, appears in Conor's room one night, but it does not scare him. The Monster tells Conor it has come to tell him three tales. After that, Conor must tell the fourth tale. Although Conor feels like he is dreaming, he came to a conclusion that it isn't a dream after seeing the leaves of the yew tree scattered around his bedroom the next morning.

Conor's mother is still in the house but too ill to do much. Conor gets ready by himself and goes to school, where he is bullied by a local boy and his friends, but Conor ignores them. Lily often tends to help Conor but he eventually rejects her as she is one of the reasons that Conor is being bullied as she tells everyone about his mother's illness. After returning home, Conor's mother informs him that his grandmother will be coming the next day to help them. Conor was pissed. The monster in his Hallucination, started to narrate Conor the first tale. The first tale of the monster is about a prince who murders his young bride in order to organize a revolution to overthrow the queen, who is secretly a witch, it confuses Conor, it is not clear for him that who is good or bad in the story, and the Monster reminds him that life, stories and people are good or bad, but a mix of both.

Conor's grandmother arrives, cold and aloof, and he feels more alone than ever. The boys at school keep picking on him, but he ignores it. He tells Lily that he's upset that she was the first to know about his mother's illness and told everyone, and that's the reason others acting weird towards him. This is why he refuse her friendship. After school, Conor's grandmother reports that his mother had to go back to the hospital and that he will have to stay at her house for a few days.

Grandma's house is attention and perfect and he does not feel comfortable there. At Midnight the Monster visits and tells him the second tale, which is about an apothecary and a rector. They are at odds in the village, with the parson belittling the apothecary's methods and refusing to give him a permission to use the village's yew tree to make healing balms. When the parson's own daughter falls ill, he tries to get apothecary's help, even suggesting to go back on his faiths to save them. The Monster demolishes the parson's house in the dream, telling Conor that the rector would not hold to his truth and how important it is to believe something and stick to it. Conor in his Hallucination helps the Monster in demolishing the house because the release of anger feels good, When Conor woke-up he finds that he has demolished much of his grandma's sitting room. She returns home but rather than punishing him, she finishes the job in tears.

Conor's father arrives from America, he expects a conversation from the adults and realizes that they would not be honest with him. At school, the bully and his friends accept to refuse Conor rather than beat on him, and this is somehow worse. Conor's mother confesses that she is on the very last treatment option available, Conor became hopeless knowing that, but his mother has hope as it comes from the yew tree, she believes that the yew tree will somehow save her.

The next day, Harry, the bully at school grimly tells Conor that he is No longer visible for him. Conor is infuriated, and the Monster in his Hallucination arrives to tell Conor the third tale, in which a man who was invisible makes himself seen. In the dream state, the Monster hits the other boy in his Hallucination, making himself seen. However, ultimately Conor realizes that it was he who beat up the boy and not the monster and the boy was none other than his bully Harry, and he is taken to the headmistress and the headmistress being aware of Conor's situation, did not punish him. Conor learns from the Monster that even though he made himself seen through his fierceness, his fellow students start to ignore him because of fear. A few days passed with no recovery of his mother as she builds-up an infection in her lungs and sleeps most of the time. At school Conor's friend Lily approaches him, telling him that she wants to be friend with him, unfortunately he is pulled from school to see his mother, who is not reacting to the treatment.

Conor's mother tells him that the yew tree would not help her recover, and Conor is angry at her and at the world and refused to talk with her, she comprehends. She drifts off to sleep and Conor

requests his grandma to take him home so he can go to the yew tree. At home, Conor demands the Monster to justify why it did not help his mother in her recovery. The Monster in his Hallucination answers that it came to cure Conor, and not his mother.

Conor's real nightmare begins, in his Hallucination his mother is hanging over a cliff and Conor cries hard and without his knowledge lets go of her hands. The truth is that Conor is tired of his mother's illness and is ready for her to die, but he becomes lonely once she dies and that is the reason that he is not ready to accept his mother's death. The Monster convinces him this is not true, that his emotions are normal and it needs Conor to admit this so he can forgive himself and live his own life. Conor reaches the hospital and finally confesses his mother that he does not want her to die and also want her to be with him, the final scene shows him standing by her bedside, anticipating her passing with grief.

Throughout the story, Conor experiences vivid hallucinations in the form of a monstrous yew tree that visits him at night. This monster serves as a manifestation of Conor's inner turmoil and repressed emotions. It challenges him to confront his feelings of anger, guilt, and denial surrounding his mother's illness. The Hallucinations provide Conor with a way to express and process his complex emotions in a safe space. They also blur the line between reality and fantasy, reflecting Conor's struggle to accept the harsh truth of his mother's impending death.

Conor's hallucinations, particularly the appearance of the monster, serve as a form of escapism from the harsh reality of his mother's illness. They allow him to momentarily detach himself from the pain and fear associated with her impending death. Through these hallucinations, Conor finds a way to cope with the overwhelming emotions he is experiencing.

The hallucinations also act as a conduit for Conor to express his subconscious thoughts and feelings. The monster, representing Conor's suppressed emotions, confronts him with harsh truths that he may not be willing to acknowledge consciously. Through these hallucinatory encounters, Conor is forced to confront his deepest fears, anxieties, and guilt. The hallucinations in the novel blur the lines between reality and fantasy, mirroring Conor's struggle to differentiate between what is real and what is imagined. This reflects the confusion and disorientation he experiences as he grapples with his mother's illness and impending loss.

The ambiguity of these hallucinations adds to the complexity of Conor's emotional journey. The themes of imagination and hallucination prompt exploration into the nature of reality and subjective experience. In literature, characters may grapple with questions of perception and truth, questioning the validity of their own sensory experiences or confronting the possibility of multiple realities. This theme invites readers to consider the fluidity of truth and the role of perception in shaping our understanding of the world. Ultimately, the theme of hallucination in *A Monster Calls* serves as a metaphor for the ways in which individuals cope with grief and trauma. It highlights the power of imagination and storytelling as tools for healing and self-discovery.

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