

THE CRYPTID CATCHER: READERS THEATER

SETTING THE SCENE:

Clivo Wren has just discovered that his recently deceased father was not an archeologist, but a Cryptid Catcher, a man on a mission to capture, test, and release the cryptids of the world for their protection. Clivo has also discovered that he is supposed to continue his father's life mission, and the only clue about where to start is a business card for the International Cryptozoology Museum in Portland, Maine. A stop at the museum and a tussle with a fake cryptid have brought him here – a suburban Maine basement with a group of odd middle schoolers calling themselves the Myth Blasters. *Could these kids really be Clivo's dad's research team??*

CHARACTERS/ROLES:

- **AMELIA:** *Myth Blasters Role:* Lead researcher. *Personality:* Bold.
- **STEPHANIE:** *Myth Blasters Role:* Satellite and confidential file hacker. *Personality:* Shy.
- **CHARLES:** *Myth Blasters Role:* Film and photography expert, debunker. *Personality:* Like an intense, angry rabbit.
- **HERNANDO:** *Myth Blasters Role:* Information sifter. *Personality:* Chill.
- **ADAM:** *Myth Blasters Role:* Creator of origin stories. *Personality:* High-strung.
- **CLIVO:** *Role:* Cryptid Catcher (new to the job). *Personality:* Up for anything.
- **NARRATOR**



SCRIPT:

NARRATOR: Half an hour later Clivo was sitting on a beanbag chair in front of a digital projector for a PowerPoint presentation on Nessie. Amelia clicked through the photos, some in color and others in a grainy black and white. Amelia sounded like a stuffy professor giving a lecture.

AMELIA: We've sifted through all three thousand documented photographs and deemed seventy of them to be real. That is, actual photos of Nessie and not fake ones using toy boats and figurines.

NARRATOR: Clivo was already amazed at the smarts of the group.

CLIVO: How did you do that?

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CHARLES: That'd be me. Most are easy to debunk. You just look at forced perspective, examine shadows on the water, pixilate the images and look for inconsistencies, etc. Others are a little trickier, but nothing a night of Moxie and energy drinks and Cheez-its can't handle.

NARRATOR: Amelia pointed a red laser dot at Charles's chest.

AMELIA: Charles is our film and photography expert. Show him any photo or video and he can verify its authenticity within a day.

CHARLES: Within a minute, yo. And don't point that thing at me! It freaks me out, like a sniper's gotta rifle pointed at my chest.

CLIVO: Have you ever had a sniper's weapon pointed at your chest?

NARRATOR: Ever since Clivo discovered that aliens and other cryptids really did exist, his orientation as to what was and wasn't possible in the world was majorly out of whack.

CHARLES: Dude, when you know the stuff that we know, it's just a matter of time.

NARRATOR: Clivo wasn't sure about that, but Charles's intense angry rabbit look was very convincing. Amelia clicked the control and hand drawn pictures of Nessie glowed on the screen. She looked like a long serpent with multiple humps sprouting out of the water.

AMELIA: Next up, going through literature and finding stories, no matter how obscure, that references the cryptid. Legends always have some grain of truth to them. There are very few written that are just pure fabrication. That's my department. I found over two hundred references to a sea monster in the loch, going all the way back to the first century AD, well before she was documented by photo.

CLIVO: But I thought cryptozoology and mythozoology were two totally separate things.

ADAM: [Groaning]. Let me guess, you were on IMythsThePast.com. Those guys are so boring.

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AMELIA: They kind of are separate things. Cryptids are animals from folklore that may actually exist, it just hasn't been proven yet. Myths are stories created to explain the world around us, sometimes using gods and magical creatures. Now, most people don't believe mythological beings actually exist. Nobody has seen Zeus, Medusa, or a minotaur, or at least there are no reliable accounts in the modern historical record. But if we did have a sighting of them, they'd be considered a cryptid. At least according to us.

ADAM: And we'd be after them like stink on a monkey.

NARRATOR: Clivo looked around in disbelief. He was officially stepping into territory that made his brain hurt.

CLIVO: You don't actually believe in Zeus do you?

AMELIA: [Shrugging] We're more science-based. We don't discount the possibility that he exists, but we focus our attention on things that have more data attached to them.

NARRATOR: Clivo opened his mouth then shut it again. Aliens and Bigfoot were about all he could handle right now. Contemplating the existence of gods would have to wait. Amelia clicked her control again and what looked to be satellite photos of the loch sprung to the screen. Clivo leaned forward in amazement, or as much as he could lean forward on a beanbag chair.

CLIVO: Are those satellite photos?

AMELIA: Sure are. Miss Hacker over here was able to break into a private satellite and steal a peak from above. As you can see, we found a shape in the water that matches the size and description of Nessie, even with the poor resolution.

NARRATOR: Stephanie spoke next. She was eager but timid, kind of like a mouse delicately sniffing a delicious piece of cheese.

STEPHANIE: I was only able to gain control of the satellite for a few minutes before I was bumped off. But I'm hoping to increase my time and, someday, get into a government spy satellite. Their visual precision is incredible. I could zoom in from fifteen miles above the earth and tell if you're wearing contacts. Which you're not.

CLIVO: Wait, you can hack satellites?

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NARRATOR: Clivo's respect of the group was going through the roof.

ADAM: This presentation will go a lot faster if you keep your expressions of constant amazement to a minimum.

NARRATOR: Clivo made a zipper motion with his fingers across his lips.

[GOOD STOPPING POINT OR YOU CAN CONTINUE THE SCENE...]

NARRATOR: The screen clicked again and again, showing pictures of boats trawling the loch with various nets and sonar equipment.

AMELIA: Hernando here is our information sifter. He takes everything that Charles, Stephanie, and I find and makes sense of it all. Triangulates coordinates, that kind of thing.

HERNANDO: [clearing his throat] Can I have the laser, please?

AMELIA: Huh? Oh sure, sorry about that Hernando. He also researches previous attempts to find said cryptids and gathers their data. So, once we've done all of that, we usually have a pretty good idea if the cryptid is real or not and where to find them.

NARRATOR: Clivo scratched his head. He had so many questions he wasn't sure where to begin.

CLIVO: So why hasn't anybody found Nessie? If there have been so many searches, it seems like somebody would have found her by now.

AMELIA: [hesitant and uncertain] Ah, that's the secret now, isn't it? They're not called hidden animals for nothing. Every cryptid is a singular, unique creature that has adapted to avoid detection, sometimes for centuries. They are rare, evolutionary mutations that have survived specifically because they haven't been found. But, as each cryptid is unique in its evolutionary development, it's also unique in its ability to hide.

CLIVO: Unique in its ability to hide?

AMELIA: Perhaps they're invisible or really good at camouflaging themselves. It's different for each creature. We know they're there, the data is sound, they're just super hard to find.

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CLIVO: So how do you find them?

STEPHANIE: We actually don't know. That'll be your job to figure out.

ADAM: [waving his arms dramatically] I've been waiting patiently over here, people.

NARRATOR: Amelia flipped to the next slide that showed a maniacally smiling Adam wearing lab goggles and holding two flaming glass beakers. Amelia sighed.

AMELIA: Sorry, he wanted a rather dramatic photo.

NARRATOR: Adam unfolded his gangly limbs from his chair and stood up.

ADAM: To wrap up this rather dry yet informative session, yours truly figures out how the animal evolved. Similar to Batman and Spider-Man, I figure out its origin story.

CLIVO: Origin story? Like where they were born?

AMELIA: Not where they were born, but how they were born. It's possible they were born as they exist today, but it's more likely they morphed into what they are due to some event—

ADAM: Like Peter Parker getting bit by a radioactive spider: Whammo! We have Spider- Man! Best origin story ever!

CHARLES: Dude! Not even! Captain Marvel is. An ancient wizard named Shazam bequeathing you a lightning bolt is so much better.

ADAM: I'm not getting into this with you, dude!

AMELIA: [rolling her eyes] Keep in mind, most cryptids are hundreds, if not thousands, of years old. That's impossible, unless something cataclysmic happened to cause an anomaly in their biology.

ADAM: Moving along. Once I figure out the origin story, I deduce how they hide. With Nessie, we think she's evolved to camouflage herself so thoroughly she can basically become invisible. It's the only plausible reason for why she can exist in an enclosed body of water, completely surrounded by humans, yet seen by so few people.

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CHARLES: As Sherlock Holmes said, "When you have eliminated the impossible, whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth."



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This activity was created for the middle grade novels *The Cryptid Catcher* and *The Cryptid Keeper* by Lija Fisher (FSG) in partnership with the International Cryptozoology Museum. Page 6