

The Princess and the MONSTER

Was Erin including Alexa—or making a monstrous mistake?

By Linda G. Paulsen
(Based on a true story)

A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another (John 13:34).

Erin had it all figured out. Alexa could be the monster! “She’s kind of big and slow compared to us,” Erin thought. “We can outrun her, and Alexa can still be part of the game.” It was perfect!

At recess, Erin told her friends Samantha and Natalie that Alexa had asked to play Monster and Princess with them. At first, Samantha seemed annoyed. “I thought we didn’t want her to play with us,” she said.

“I said she could be the monster,” Erin quickly explained. “We’ll have a *real* monster instead of a pretend one.”

Samantha slowly smiled at the news.

Erin told Alexa the rules of the game. “The monster lives in the castle behind the baseball diamond,” she said. “He

tries to capture the princesses while they’re picking magic flowers in the castle garden.”

“What happens if I catch someone?” Alexa asked.

“You lock her up in the tower,” Samantha said. “She has to stay there until the prince rescues her.”



“But who’s the prince?”

“He’s *pretend*,” said Natalie. “Let’s play!”

Alexa made a great monster. She stomped and growled and swung her arms in giant circles, trying to catch the princesses. The other girls squealed and dodged and ran away.

When recess ended, Erin patted Alexa on the back. They were both panting from running so much. “You were great!” she said.

“But I never caught anybody,” Alexa complained.

Erin thought about that. “Maybe we should get caught sometimes, or we’ll never get to meet the prince.”

For several days, the girls played Monster and Princess at every recess. Alexa got better at capturing the other girls. She’d grab their arms in her big hands and haul them, screaming, to the tower. It was more fun than ever!

One day at recess, Erin noticed that Alexa wasn’t running to the ball field as usual. “Come on,” Erin called. But Alexa didn’t move. Erin ran over to Alexa. “What’s the matter?” she asked.

“I don’t want to be the monster all the time,” Alexa said. “Can’t I be a princess too?”

Erin was stunned. It had never occurred to her that Alexa might not *want* to be the monster. After all, it was a great game, and she was getting to play. But fair was fair. “OK,” Erin said. “I’ll be the monster today. You can be a princess.”

Alexa smiled. The two girls ran to the field where Samantha and Natalie were waiting.

By the end of recess, Erin was nearly in tears. It was *awful* being the monster! She couldn’t catch anybody! And every time she got close, the girls



My brother and I were playing catch, and my sister thought she was being left out. We let her play with us, and we had a lot of fun. It made my sister happy, and it made me and my brother feel good inside.

Noah H., age 9, Arizona, USA

would run off screaming! Erin felt frustrated and strange, like she really was ugly or creepy. It wasn’t fun at all!

During silent reading time, Erin thought about the game. How had Alexa stood being the monster for so long? Suddenly, Erin realized that kids had always sort of treated Alexa like a “monster.” They often treated her like she was ugly or different. The game had just been another way to do the same thing! Erin realized she hadn’t been kind at all! She felt ashamed, and she said a prayer in her heart. “I’m sorry! Help me to fix it.”

At the next recess, Erin called her friends over. “Let’s go back to having a pretend monster,” she said.

“Why?” Samantha asked.

“It’s not fun being the monster. Nobody should have to do it.”

Samantha looked at Erin for a long moment. Then she shrugged. “Whatever,” she said.

Erin and Alexa smiled at each other. Then they ran out to the field together. ♦

