

The Monster in



I HATE 11:29.

That's when breakfast has worn off.

My belly is empty like an ice-cream cone when the ice cream is licked out—a dry, sugary shell with spitty smears. It growls loud and fierce, as though a Hungry Monster just snuck into our school.

Everyone goes quiet at my enormous, embarrassing stomach sounds. My best friend Joey laughs, but it's not my fault.

Hungry Monster is loose, and Joey will be sorry!

Hungry Monster is humongous.

He is starving, starvering, starvatiuous! He doesn't wait his turn in line.

He thumps down the hall to the cafeteria, flinging tough fifth graders against the walls. He knocks the music teacher through a bass drum like it's tissue paper.

Hungry Monster will snarf the pizza, devour the applesauce, and slurp the chocolate milk.

He piles his lunch tray high.

As he storms the cash register, his belly roars mightily. He bellows, "Bring me some children!"

The cook stutters, "Yuh-yuh-yes, sir. You may have . . . him!" She points at Joey.

Bill! Don't snarf — quickly eat — it all up! We haven't picked the movie yet.

Voila! Here is my special buttery, cheesy movie popcorn.

Now we're talkin'!



**by Tina Connolly
Art by S. Y. Lee**

the cafeteria

Now who's sorry he laughed?

Hungry Monster growls with greedy delight. He stacks the blubbering boy on his lunch tray, right in the applesauce, and gives the cook his lunch card.

The cook stammers, "Suh-suh-sorry, sir, but children are an extra 45 cents."

Hungry Monster doesn't have 45 cents. He spent it last week on bubblegum, the pink kind that makes bubbles bigger than your head—and sometimes stops embarrassing belly rumbles if you chew it in class, sneaky slow.

So Hungry Monster flicks the Joey kid off his tray. His thundering tummy can wait no longer. He stomps to the nearest table with his plain, ordinary lunch.

He chomps his pizza, slurps his applesauce, downs his chocolate milk, and burps blissfully.

I like 11:45, when I have vanquished Hungry Monster.

I am brave. I am full. I am glad Hungry Monster did not eat Joey.

Joey splits a cupcake in half (a gigantic chocolate one with sprinkles) and hands half to me.

"Thank you," I say.

Joey roars, "You're welcome." 



We could watch
The Last Giant.

That movie's not scary!

But it's just so sad.

True! I always start
blubbering — loudly crying.

