

The brave boy did as he always did when the monster slept. He drew.

The monster's breath wafted boozy clouds as it snored on a sofa,
one limb drooping down to touch the stained floor.

Crouched only a few feet away, an ink stick in his grasp,
the boy sketched the monster, not as a monster,
but as he wished the monster were, as a gentle being, as a good father.

The boy's hand moved over the paper bag as his functional eye stared at the sleeper,
the single-eyed scrutiny following the monster's loosely hanging arm down to its digits,
now unbent and harmless.

A crumpled bill had dropped from the monster's open fist.

Without a noise the boy laid down his paper and ink stick to sneak closer to the bill.

He took the cash. Smoothed its crinkles. Fifty hillers!

He folded the violet rectangle and tucked it in his trouser pocket.

Twelve minutes later found the boy hurrying down the gray cinderblock stairwell,
past cracked windows duct-taped with cardboard patches,

through the drifting fug of stale beer and rotting rinds and crusts, and away
from shouts of tired mothers, a crying child, a teenage girl singing
a flat copy of her favorite popstar. The boy reached the pavement. He ran.