

# STRANGE BUT TRUE STORIES

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**WARNING**

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## BOOK 2

Bob Lazar, the UFO Guy  
The Mothman Mystery  
Mischievous Spirits  
...and More!

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# STRANGE BUT TRUE STORIES

## LIZZIE BORDEN— DID SHE OR DIDN'T SHE?

*Lizzie Borden took an axe  
And gave her mother forty whacks.  
When she saw what she had done  
She gave her father forty-one.*

(Anonymous)

It happened on August 4, 1892, in Fall River, Massachusetts. It was a warm summer's morning, a little after 11:00 A.M.

Lizzie Borden called out to the family maid, Bridget Sullivan, telling her to come quickly. Then Lizzie showed the maid a gruesome scene. Lizzie's father, Andrew Borden, was lying dead on the sofa in the downstairs parlor. The man had been brutally murdered.

Abby, Lizzie's stepmother, was later found dead in an upstairs bedroom. She and her husband had been hacked to death with either a hatchet or an axe.

Contrary to the legend, Abby had died from 18—not 40—blows to the head, and Andrew died from 11 blows.

After a one-week investigation, the police arrested Lizzie. She was kept in jail for almost a year before her trial began. The trial lasted only two weeks—but it was a coast-to-coast sensation. More than 40 newspapers from across the country sent reporters to cover the story. On a local playground, school children began to sing, “*Lizzie Borden took an axe . . .*”

The evidence against 32-year-old Lizzie was largely circumstantial. When the police arrived at the Borden home, Lizzie had no bloodstains on her. And the exact weapon was never found.

Lizzie claimed she’d been in the barn for part of the morning. A witness came forward to state that he had seen a woman emerging from the barn. Another witness claimed to have seen a wild-eyed man fleeing from the house. But were the witnesses believable?

## Lizzie Borden—Did She or Didn't She?

The prosecution, however, insisted that there was good reason to suspect Lizzie. At the time of the murders, the maid was outdoors washing windows. Lizzie's older sister was out of town, and a houseguest was out visiting relatives. At the time of her stepmother's death, Lizzie had been the only person in the house.

And Lizzie had a motive! Her father was one of the richest men in Fall River—but he was tight-fisted. No matter how Lizzie begged, he refused to move the family to a better neighborhood. And Lizzie desperately wanted to live on The Hill. There, she hoped to become part of Fall River "society."

Lizzie hated her stepmother, Abby. Did she want to kill her father and stepmother so she would inherit their money? Then a friend testified about what she saw three days after the murders. She watched as Lizzie burned a dress in the kitchen fire! Lizzie claimed it

was an old dress stained with paint. But was it really paint—or was it blood?

The problem for the jurors was this: Abby Borden was killed at 9:30 in the morning. Andrew Borden died an hour and a half later. If Lizzie committed the murders, how did she clean herself up after Andrew's death? After all, she'd called to the maid shortly after 11:00. That was just minutes after Andrew had been murdered.

But how could an outsider have committed the murders? Where had he or she hidden for the hour and a half between the killings?

In the end, the all-male jury acquitted Lizzie. They simply could not believe that a refined young woman who taught Sunday school could commit such horrible crimes.

After the trial, Lizzie and her sister bought a huge house on The Hill. Sadly, the townspeople didn't welcome Lizzie into society. Even though she had been

## **Lizzie Borden—Did She or Didn't She?**

found not guilty, many people believed that she was.

Today, the Borden house at 92 Second Street is a bed and breakfast inn. Guests can spend the night in the room where—now more than 100 years ago—Lizzie's stepmother was slaughtered. They can sit on a replica of the sofa where Andrew Borden was hacked to death. They can also enjoy the same breakfast that the maid served to the Bordens so long ago. By all accounts, the rooms are booked for months in advance!

What's your opinion? Did Lizzie get away with murder? Your guess is as good as anyone else's!



# STRANGE BUT TRUE STORIES

## THE BEAST OF GEVAUDAN

People in France have a saying: “When twigs crack, don’t whistle!” That means you shouldn’t make a sound if you’re alone in the woods and you hear twigs snapping. Something might be following you!

Perhaps this saying caught on because of the Beast of Gevaudan. It has been said that the Beast killed at least 100 people. Other sources say twice as many. No one will ever know the exact number.

The terror began in 1764. A young woman was out herding her cows in the French countryside. Then, suddenly, she was attacked by a huge beast! Luckily, the cows fended off the creature with their horns. The young woman escaped with only minor wounds.

Later she told the people in her village that the Beast looked something like a

## The Beast of Gevaudan

wolf. But no one had ever seen a wolf like this one! It was about the size of a cow. It had a wide chest, a huge head and neck, and short straight ears. Its nose was like a greyhound's, and its fangs were about an inch and a half long. A black stripe ran down its back from its head to the tip of its long, thin tail. But the most amazing thing about it, she added, was that it could leap as far as 30 feet at a time!

In the following months the beast continued to attack women and children. It also attacked lone men who were taking their livestock to pasture. Many of these people were torn apart, eaten, or carried off. Oddly enough, the Beast always attacked during the day.

In October, two hunters shot at the Beast. To their amazement, it fell down, but got up again. It fell again after a second shot, but it got up and ran unsteadily toward the woods. The hunters shot a third time. Once more the Beast fell, stood up, and ran.

The hunters were certain they'd soon find the Beast dead. Instead, over the next few days, the Beast furiously attacked even more people. Was the monster trying to get even for the wounds it suffered?

In November, a military man, Captain Duhamel, organized another hunt. He and his soldiers went after the Beast, setting trap after trap. But each time the Beast stepped in a snare, it somehow managed to escape.

Now a huge reward was offered. Hunters from all over France arrived. For months they hunted the Beast—with no luck! Meanwhile, the Beast continued its attacks right under the hunters' noses.

By now, word of the Beast had reached the King of France. King Louis XV sent a famous hunter, Monsieur Denneval, to the district. Supposedly, Denneval had killed 1,200 wolves.

In February 1765, Denneval started to track the Beast with his bloodhounds. But he had no luck either.

## The Beast of Gevaudan

Then, in April, a nobleman spotted the Beast near his home. It was stalking a shepherd. The nobleman and his two brothers ambushed the creature. Though they shot at it, it managed to escape into the woods. But it left a lot of blood behind, so they knew they'd hit it. Had it limped away to die? They thought so.

Villagers turned out to celebrate the death of the Beast. In the middle of the celebration, however, a rider galloped into the village square. He announced that *he* had just killed the Beast.

The local people were enraged. They grabbed pitchforks, long poles, and bayonets—whatever they had at hand. Dogs were put onto the fresh scent and set off to find the Beast. But once more, the Beast was nowhere to be found.

The King was furious. His greatest hunter—Denneval—had given up. Now rumors were spreading that the Beast had to be a werewolf.

Antoine de Beauterne was the king's

official problem-solver. For three months he analyzed the situation. He studied the area and drew maps. He checked the routes taken by the Beast. Finally, in September, he organized a new hunt.

When hunters surrounded a ravine in the woods, the dogs suddenly began to bark wildly. The Beast, hiding in the ravine, was forced into the open. When it looked for a way to escape, De Beauterne shot it and it fell.

Then, to everyone's horror, the Beast got up. It was shot again, but, amazingly, it found a way through the circle of men! It ran into a nearby pasture and fell again. But this time the Beast did not move. At long last it really was dead!

When the hunters examined the Beast, they were amazed at its size. It was six feet long from its nose to the tip of its tail, and it weighed 143 pounds. Some time later its hide was stuffed. Then it was taken to the king, who put it into the Museum of Natural History.

## The Beast of Gevaudan

It seemed that the terror of the local French people was over. Or was it?

For two more months, the killings went on! The king was frantic. He wouldn't allow anyone to speak of the problem. That winter was a nightmare for the local people. Not only was the Beast—or perhaps even a second Beast—attacking them, but they couldn't ask for help! The following year, 1766, the attacks continued. To this day no one knows how many people were killed, because no records were kept. Families weren't allowed to report that the Beast had slaughtered their loved ones.

Finally, in June 1767, another hunt was organized. One man, Jean Chastel, had three cartridges blessed for the occasion. He joined the hunt, placing himself in the same ravine where the first Beast had been trapped and killed.

While he patiently waited for the Beast to appear, he read his prayer book.

Then one day the Beast showed its