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# The Ethics of Mr. Waternoose

The plot of *Monsters Inc.* follows two monsters who work for a corporation that supplies power to the city of Monstropolis using their only source of energy: childrens' screams. In order to collect their screams, the company employs the toughest and scariest monsters to enter the human world via closet door portals, and terrify children across the globe. However, the city is experiencing a scream shortage since kids nowadays "just don't get scared like they used to". The ethical issue this movie presents is the company's solution to this problem. Mr. Waternoose, the CEO, begins to covertly kidnap children to extract their screams by force in order to secure power for the monster world. However, kidnapping is not the only controversial decision Mr. Waternoose makes, but also lying to the world about the lethal touch of a child.

It's explained in the movie that the employees of Monsters Inc. are instructed to be cautious of letting children into the monster world. Allowing this to happen would violate the policies of the corporation and the Child Detection Agency, essentially making the harboring of a child in Monstropolis illegal. Ironically, Waternoose was violating his own rule by kidnapping children since he would theoretically be putting every monster at risk by allowing such a "toxic" being into their world; therefore his actions were not only ethically problematic, but illegal as well. Additionally, there is no concrete rule against lying to a community of people, so Waternoose's decision to tell monsters that human children are dangerous was technically legal.

Although Waternoose had the best intentions for his company, his decision to kidnap a child and lie to the public was completely unethical. Not only was he stealing a little girl from her family and bringing her into a strange unknown world, he was also planning on torturing her by sitting her down in a machine that would extract her screams until she could no longer breathe. This is something that can easily be overlooked since it is never actually shown in the

movie, but it was pretty clear that Waternoose was willing to go pretty far “before [he] let this company die”.

If Sully and Mike never found out about Waternoose’s plan, one can only imagine how many children would go missing from the human world, and maybe even end up dead. Therefore, it is definitely a good thing that they decided to expose his unethical actions. This all could have been avoided if the company figured out an alternative plan in the first place. As we saw in the end, Sully repurposes the company to produce energy from the laughs of children, which is apparently ten times as powerful. Obviously if Waternoose would have figured this out beforehand, the whole situation could have been avoided, but some other alternative energy sources were available. If Waternoose really wanted to keep Monsters Incorporated alive, he could have increased the size of his workforce to speed up energy tank production, and then the slow accumulation of children's’ screams would not have been so much of a problem. Also, knowing that scaring was no longer going to get the job done, he could have shut down the company, and then reopened it later to begin manufacturing solar power cells to power the city of Monstropolis. Finally, one other option Waternoose had was to tell everyone the truth about how human kids are not actually toxic. Then, maybe with the help of the CDA, he could have ventured into the human world and took some of our technology to begin producing electricity differently.