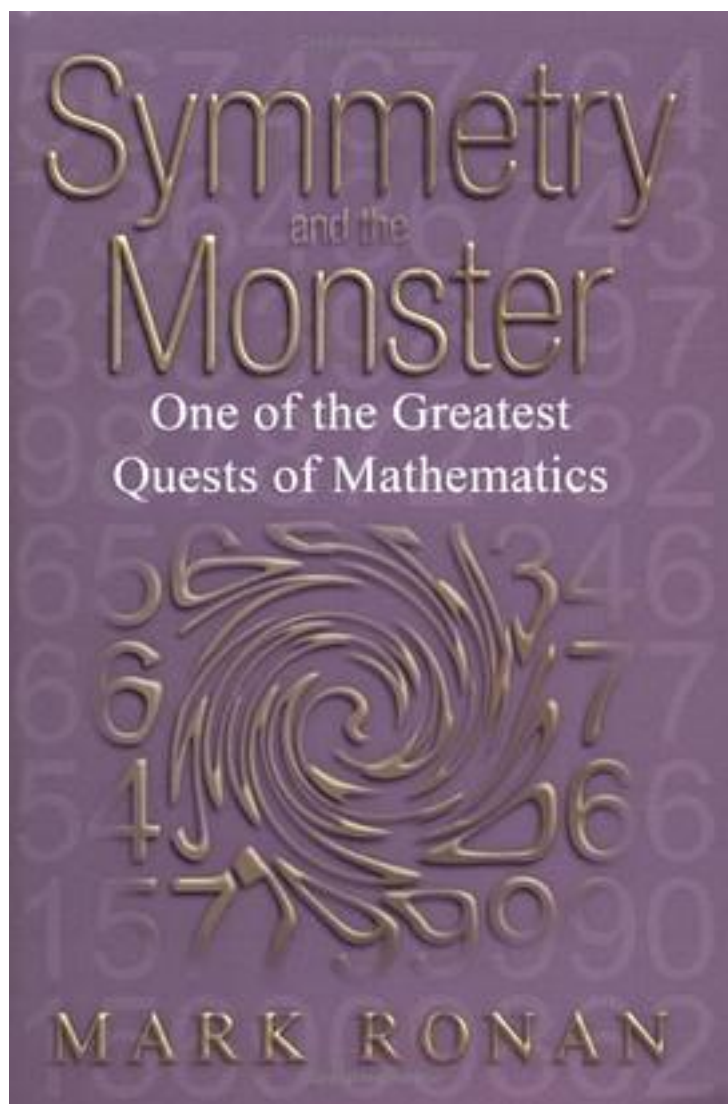


# Symmetry and the Monster



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Imagine a giant snowflake in 196,884 dimensions...This is the story of a mathematical quest that began two hundred years ago in revolutionary France, led to the biggest collaboration ever between mathematicians across the world, and revealed the 'Monster' - not monstrous at all, but a structure of exquisite beauty and complexity. Told here for the first time in accessible prose, it is a story that involves brilliant yet tragic characters, curious number 'coincidences' that led to breakthroughs in the mathematics of symmetry, and strange crystals that reach into many dimensions. And it is a story that is not yet over, for we have yet to understand the deep significance of the Monster - and its tantalizing hints of connections with the physical structure of spacetime. Once we understand the full nature of the Monster, we may well have revealed a whole new and deeper understanding of the nature of our Universe.

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