

'What do we do now?'

'We try to catch it. Jim is bringing us the boots this evening - it seems to like vandalising them so if it comes for them we'll be ready.'

Eve lifted him up and brushed him off. 'Then we'll do that.'

'It got my sweets.'

She hugged him. 'Better it has your sweets than you for its supper.'

The trap was prepared. Mel sat up in the bed, single candle lit on the nightstand as he guarded the household's boots, lined up in the middle of the room. Eve was keeping watch in the corridor outside. No one would get past her.

Around midnight, there came a scratching, but not at the door. Mel's skin stippled in goosebumps. It seemed to be coming from behind the skirting board. What if there was a passageway there too? Mel threw back the covers but then the noise stopped.

'I must be imagining it,' he murmured.

Then, to Mel's horror, a section of the wall near the fireplace nudged open. A nose appeared, accompanied by the smell of rot, then a monstrous snout, sniffing towards the boots. Two huge black eyes deep-set in wrinkled skin followed, its yellow-white fangs and red tongue visible. With

a chilling growl, it took a shoe in its mouth and began to crunch, mincing it to pieces in seconds.

'Eve!' Mel's voice was a rasp, carrying no further than his feet.

But the hound heard and looked over at the bed with an unmistakably possessive gleam in its eye. It bared its teeth, bootlace trailing.

Mel scrambled for the door, but the dog had settled on new prey. Dropping the mangled boot, it charged and knocked Mel flat. This was the end! The dog's dire breath fell on his face. Reaching for his monster gift, he zapped it with electricity. Knocked back, it yelped and then crouched for a renewed attack. 'Eve! Now would be good!'

Eve burst into the room. '*Diable!*'

Too late: the monster was already on top of him. But what was this? No teeth sinking into his neck, no pain? Maybe this murderous hound was not really so murderous after all. Mel's hand went tentatively to the creature's chin, not to zap but to scratch. Its back leg shivered with pleasure as Mel found just the right spot to rub.

'That is nothing but a puppy!' exclaimed Eve, trying to heave the dog off Mel as it smothered him with licks and wagged its tail.

Mel rolled free. 'I said you were an education for me, Eve. Of course, you're right: the smallish paw mark, the urge to play

chase with everyone, the chewing of shoes and stones! I bet it's started teething, which is why it came out of hiding now. Get down, you great lump.' Mel pushed the hound away.

The dog howled.

Sir Henry and Crichton appeared in the doorway.

'Shoot it!' bellowed Sir Henry. 'Crichton, your gun!'

'Don't you dare!' shouted Mel, wrapping his arms around the dog's head. Eve hoisted Crichton off his feet so he was left running in mid-air, gun pointing at the ceiling.

'Can't you see it's just a baby?' said Mel. 'You killed a monster hound, but did none of you stop to wonder if she might have left a monster puppy behind?'

Sir Henry gaped. 'But Sherlock Holmes - '

'I think he deduced it from the clues, when you came to him a second time. That was why he sent us. Our mission wasn't to hunt it, but to rescue it.'

'It's so sweet!' sighed Eve, stroking the creature's rough snout as it slobbered on her.

Patting the dog that was now sitting obediently, Mel faced the last Baskerville. 'I suppose this is your hound, as it was found on your land. Do you want a new dog, Sir Henry?'

'Me, take on that creature?' Sir Henry went pale.

'It'll make a mess on my clean floors,' moaned Crichton.

'Thought not. So, Eve, what do you think about the Monster Resistance getting a pet?'

'You think he'll make a good p-pet?' Sir Henry spluttered with horror.

Mel shrugged. 'Monster Resistance - and a monster hound of the Baskervilles. It's a perfect fit.'

A few days later, back in London, Mel and Eve received a letter. They almost didn't get to read it - the Baskerville puppy had got to the envelope first. Rescued from Basker's jaws, Mel shook out the mangled note.

Dear Master Foster and Mademoiselle Frankenstein,

May I congratulate you on your swift solution to the case? I deduced that only those who know what prejudice monsters face could save the young creature from the hunters' guns. I am delighted I was right. Greetings to the hound.

Yours,

Sherlock Holmes

P.S. My housekeeper, Mrs Hudson, says she will send you all of our leftover bones in hopes of saving your shoes. I fear, however, it may be too late.

Mel looked at the hole in his boot where his toe was peeking through and grinned. 'I'd say that's elementary, my dear Eve.'

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*Read more about Mel and Eve in the Mel Foster series,
available from Egmont now!*