

Huff and Puff and Blow Your House Down

by Alison

Things are not always as they first appear.

Complete short story

Chapter 1 of 1

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There's a puppy in the woodshed.

Daddy came upstairs just now to check that I'm asleep. I heard his footsteps, so I pulled the blanket up to my chin, shut my eyes, and pretended to be sleeping. Daddy peeked in through the door, I heard it creak just a bit when it opened, and then he crept away again.

What a good joke – I tricked Daddy! I'm not sleeping because I can hear something outside. It's a sort of sad and lost little noise, a bit like the puppy Miss Sloan brought to kindergarten to show us last week – it missed its mummy and whined until lunchtime, when Miss Sloan took it home again.

I get out of bed and go to my bedroom window. It's quite bright outside, even though it's night time. The moon is so big and shiny and round, and the whole garden beneath my window looks sort of silvery.

Mummy closed my window when she put me to bed this evening after my bath, but I'm big enough to open it myself now, as long as I stand on my Tommy Turtle stool. Mummy doesn't know that – she thinks I'm still too small to lift the window pane, but I can do it, a bit anyway.

I push the window up, just enough to make a space underneath, and then I put my ear to the gap, listening. And ... yes, there it is again! A little whining noise.

There's a puppy in the woodshed.

Maybe he's lost and needs a little boy to look after him and be his friend? I could feed him and brush him and he could sleep on my bed at night! I could buy him a collar and call him Buddy.

Buddy whines again – poor little thing! He's hiding in our woodshed because he's scared of the dark and wants me to go outside and get him.

But I stop halfway to my bedroom door. Daddy told me just today not to go outside without him or Mummy. He told me all about Stranger Danger and to tell him straight away if I see anybody I don't know hanging around outside the house...

My puppy whines again, louder this time. I go out the bedroom door and downstairs. I'll ask Daddy to come outside with me to the woodshed, and he'll take his wand to protect us against strangers. Then I can get Buddy and bring him inside.

Mummy and Daddy are talking in the lounge room. I stop on the stairs and listen for a moment.

"You're sure the wards will hold? He won't be able to get in?" Mummy's voice sounds odd, sort of scared.

"I've set them on every door and window," Daddy answers. "If anybody tries to come inside while we're asleep, the alarms will go off."

Oh, they're talking about Stranger Danger again. Daddy's a wizard and Mummy's a Muggle, so he must be telling her he can protect us with his magic.

"I'm scared!" Mummy says. "That horrible letter he sent! He means to hurt us, I know it! And he's a wizard too, he knows about wards ..."

I peek around the doorframe. Daddy has his arms around Mummy and she's crying.

"I won't let him get to us," Daddy says softly. "I've modified a spell so that my wand will shoot silver darts. Silver is deadly to them, remember."

"Why doesn't he just leave us alone? We've never even met him!"

"It's my fault. I've been lobbying the Ministry for stricter controls on his kind. It didn't occur to me that he'd take it as a grave insult."

"The Ministry should take the threat against us more seriously!" Mummy sounds angry now. "They just shrugged it off, as if we don't matter. We should have Aurors stationed around the house, at least!"

"The Auror teams are stretched to breaking point at the moment with the threat from He Who Must Not Be Named. I'm afraid protecting this family from anybody else is pretty far down on their list of priorities. We're on our own ..."

They sound really upset. I'd better not disturb them when they're talking about Stranger Danger. I can go out into the yard and get Buddy by myself. I mean, it's not like I'm going outside the fence or anything, just into our back garden.

But Daddy said he'd put wards on all the doors, and that means they're locked with magic. So how can I get out? I think about it for a moment. What about the loose wall panel in the laundry? I'm pretty sure he doesn't know about that, it's behind the door, I only found out it was loose by accident when I leaned against it and it moved. Unless you look closely, it's just like the rest of the wall.

I creep down the hall and into the laundry. It's dark and the shadows are scary, but I think of Buddy all alone in the dark and tell myself to be brave. I'm a big boy now, I'm five already!

I lean against the panel and it moves; I can see the dark gap in the wall leading outside the house. I push and shove and get my leg through, one arm, the other arm, then my head. There's cobwebs and rusty nails and things, and it's a bit frightening because I'm scared I'll get stuck, but I wriggle and shove and then I'm out! I brush the cobwebs out of my hair and look at my leg. There's a scrape across my knee, I think it's bleeding a bit. I'll need a bandaid, but it can wait until after I've got Buddy.

There's a puppy in the woodshed and his name is Buddy.

I can hear him whining again, but he sounds happy that I'm coming to find him – perhaps he can smell me, because I still can't see him. It's a bit creepy outside at night, but the full moon gives lots of light. The woodshed door is open and I stare into the shadows.

"Buddy? Here boy, come on, I've come to take you inside!"

Something moves in the shadows. Something that sounds big. Suddenly I can see eyes gleaming in the moonlight, too high up to be a puppy, and a long growl rumbles out of the woodshed. I scream and turn to run, and a monster jumps onto me.

"Daddy! Help!" I scream again as I feel the monster bite down on my leg. "DADDY!"

I try to crawl away, but the monster is biting my leg; it's claws are cutting into my skin, and then I hear the back door flung open and Mummy is screaming and Daddy is standing with his wand out, and there's a huge noise and flash of light and the monster lets go of my leg, and then Mummy is holding me and sobbing, and Daddy is running to the fence where the monster jumped over and he fires again, then curses.

I cling to Mummy, crying and saying over and over, "I'm sorry, I'm sorry," and she's hugging me and then Daddy comes up and says "Lumos" and in the soft light from his wand he looks at my leg and swears again.

I'm feeling cold now, so cold and sick and shivery, and I don't want to let go of Mummy but Daddy takes me from her.

"The bite broke the skin," he says and Mummy begins to cry all over again. Daddy feels my forehead. "Shit, he's burning up already. He needs to get to St. Mungo's right away. Hold tight to my arm, Rosemary, I'll Apparate you both Side-Along."

Then Daddy looks down at me. "Why, Remus? After all I said, why did you go outside tonight?"

"It was my puppy," I whisper. "I had to get Buddy ..."

There's a monster in the woodshed and it's name is Fenrir.

I feel giddy and sick. The silvery moon looks like a laughing face, a horrible monstrous face with fangs and claws. I shut my eyes so I can't see it laughing at me any more.

The End.

Author's note: If you liked this story, please have a read of my original story "Love Inhuman" at this link:

<http://www.thepetulantpoetess.com/viewstory.php?sid=11932>

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