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Opening extract from

Shaun the Sheep – Tales from Mossy Bottom Farm
The Beast of Soggy Moor

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Chapter One

The Silence of the Sheep

Mist oozed through the meadow, creeping into the farmyard from Soggy Moor. Deep, sleepy snores shook the rafters of the Mossy Bottom Farm barn. Lit by moonbeams shining through cracks in the walls, the Flock slept, their snores broken by a horrible slurping, lip-smacking sound. In her dream, Shirley was doing breaststroke through a sea of cake.

But not everyone on Mossy Bottom Farm was sleeping. Bats twittered around the crumbling chimneys of the farmhouse. A single light burned in a high window. Silhouetted, the Farmer was trimming his nose hair with a pair of garden shears.

And below, someone or something padded through the farmyard on silent paws – a dark figure with mist curling around its ankles. It was making a low growling noise that got louder with every step. Hunger gnawing at its stomach, it peered around in the moonlight.

A tiny bit of drool leaked from the corner of its mouth.

It was starving.

It needed to feed.

Bones, it thought to itself. Lovely fresh bones. And a cup of tea.

Bitzer stepped out of the fog and stopped by a gate where a crooked sign was hung.



His stomach grumbled again. Embarrassed, Bitzer patted it, wishing he'd brought a biscuit with him. Evening rounds were almost finished, though. Soon, he could settle down for a quiet night in with his favourite bone and a cup of tea. Now, what was left to do?

He checked his clipboard. The Flock were tucked up in the barn, the Farmer was in the farmhouse, the ducks were playing a late night game of cards and the pigs were snoring like bulldozers. But there was something he had forgotten. Muttering to himself, he flipped a page and peered at it in the moonlight. The chickens! After jabbing the clipboard with his pencil, he set off towards the hen house, humming, "Pum pum pa puuum."

The bush rustled. Bitzer's ears twitched. Just the wind, he told himself as he arrived at the chicken coop and went inside.

One chicken, two chickens, three chickens... Bitzer ticked them off his list, grinning to himself when Beryl clucked in dozy surprise and laid an egg in her sleep. Breakfast had arrived.

Four chickens, five chickens— AAAA


AAARROOOOOOOOOOO
Bonk!
COCK-A-
Doooo
oodle...
...do!

Bitzer's knees started to knock. He couldn't go outside; there was something out there. Something that didn't sound at all friendly. In fact, it sounded like it gobbled sheepdogs for breakfast.

Bitzer clutched his paws together pleadingly. He was too young to be gobbled up. Could he stay a little longer? He'd be very, very quiet. The chickens wouldn't know he was there. Wouldn't the chickens feel safer with a dog to protect them?

The cockerel sniffed, fixed him with a beady eye and pointed with his wing again. OUT!

Bitzer peered outside. The moon shone down. Nothing moved but the bats and the silhouette of the Farmer, which was hopping up and down, clutching its nose. Bitzer gulped.



He wasn't afraid, he told himself with a nervous chuckle. Oh no, it would take more than a silly howl to scare him. He was the kind of dog that licked the face of fear. Besides, the howling was probably just Shaun up to his usual tricks.

Bitzer nodded. *Yes, that was it.* Shaun would be out there, a sheet over his head, ready to jump out and scare him. Well, Bitzer did not scare easily. After tucking the clipboard under his arm, he marched out of the hen house.

AAAAAARRRROOOOOooooooooooo!

Bitzer threw his clipboard into the air with a yelp. Shaun hadn't made that terrifying sound. And if Shaun hadn't ... what had?

Clouds rolled away from the moon. Long shadows fell across the dark meadow. There, outlined against the wall of the barn, was the shadow of a ...

... BEAST!

