Once upon a time Mrs. Archer Hemingway left her house and three children to go into the city overnight. She said to the dog, little thinking that he would take her seriously, “Take care of the house for me until I get back, Dog.”

Then she laughed and went outside to say goodbye to the Children. As soon as she had closed the door, Dog sniffed in disgust.

“Humph,” he said. “She doesn’t think I can do it.”

Then he looked around the house and sniffed again. He guessed he would show her! Mrs. Archer Hemingway had absolutely no respect for canine capabilities. In fact, that was the principle reason he had never bothered to speak to her. Instead, Dog chose only to speak to the Children, since they recognized true genius when they saw it. They were the only ones that knew that Dog read them books in the library after the grown-ups had gone to bed at night. Dog also could bake a delicious pie when he wanted to. He also had been known to help the Eldest out with the ironing when she was pressed for time.

Dog was standing in the middle of the living room when the Children came trooping in from saying goodbye to Mamma. They had expected to get out of their nap’s, but they knew that Dog was very strict in the matter of getting one’s rest, so they did not register any excuses and went on upstairs. Dog smiled; they knew who was boss around here, he thought.

The living room looked dusty to Dog, so he put on a flowered apron that Mrs. Hemingway had left in the kitchen and started to clean. Dog really deplored the fact that Mrs. Hemingway was such a poor custodian of his home, as he himself was really a frustrated homemaker who had never found a soulmate as domestic as himself. He dusted the living room with his bushy tail, rearranged the china in the curiosity cabinet to suit his taste, and gave the living room a vacuuming which he privately thought had not been done well in some time. Messy, messy, messy was all that he could think about.

The living room clean, he thought that the Children had had plenty of sleep and called to all of them to get up. The youngest had braids all the way down her back, so Dog sat on one of the beds to plait them. He found an old curry comb that they had used on him and brushed the Youngest one’s hair until it gleamed and shone the way his own coat did. Dog found the braids extremely hard to do, so he sent the Middle one to get some scissors.
sors. The Youngest cried, but dog insisted that all this bother about braids was nonsense, so he stopped crying and Dog cut all her hair off up to her ears. He thought she looked much less like an Afghan hound and told her so, which made her laugh in the mirror at herself.

The Children screamed and laughed until Dog said he could stand just so much, and made them lie down on the floor, Dog made the beds, using French corners. He sometimes suspected that Mrs. Hemingway just smoothed the bedspread over the sheets, as they were always lumpy when he took a nap on one of them.

When he was finished with the cleaning of the upstairs, Dog took the children down to the kitchen with him. He told them stories of Pooch Paradise and the dog afterworld as he prepared dinner. They did not like the canned horsemeat, they told him, and he got rather cross when they said they were to have the chicken in the refrigerator. He snappishly told them that chicken bones were bad for them, as they might splinter in the windpipe. They quieted down after that, because no one ever wanted to make Dog angry. But they all had to speak before they could eat. The Eldest said some lines of Shakespeare that she had memorized under Dog’s tutelage, and the Middle one recited a poem that Dog had read to her from A Child’s Garden of Verses (Dog approved of Shakespeare, Robert Louis Stevenson, and Sir Walter Scott, as they seemed to approve of dogs too), and the Youngest lisped out grace, with only a little coaching from Dog.

They ate horsemeat in casserole, with biscuits (Dog did not approve of white bread), and vegetable stew. The Children questioned Dog’s dessert as it was ice cream with gravy over it, but Dog said he had been eating it that way all his life, so that settled the question.

After dinner Dog licked the dishes clean and dried them with his tail. The Children were happy about this, as they had no work to do. He let the Children play then for an hour while he read the paper, which was a pleasure he seldom could afford when Mrs. Hemingway was at home.

When the clock struck exactly seven o’clock Dog ushered the Children up to bed. They were always allowed to be up until eight when their mother was at home, but Dog thought this practice was most negligent on Mrs. Hemingway’s part. The Children never objected to Dog’s putting them to bed though, as they always liked to hear him howl them to sleep. Soon, when his songs were exhausted Dog left them, giving due warning that he would not listen to any pleas for drinks of water after he left. Then Dog went down to the library, where he was
reading Freud, and settled down to a long night's reading before Mrs. Hemingway came home.

* * * * *

The next day when Mrs. Hemingway arrived home from the city, she was amazed to find the household running smoothly. However, she was surprised that the chicken she had prepared for her children's dinner was untouched and that the waste basket was full with dog food cans. She also could not remember rearranging the china cabinet or putting French corners on the bedsheets. She then found her Youngest child's hair shorn and cried and said she would never leave them alone again. The Children told her it had been the dog's work, but Mrs. Hemingway said they were all born liars and had gotten it from their father.

Dog knew Mrs. Hemingway would never believe the Children, so he lay on the living room floor, surveyed his handiwork and smiled, his bushy tail wagging vigorously.

§ § § §

Sixteen

Bertha Deschler

It was one of those delightful April days. As Ellen half-glanced at the delicate new watch on her dainty wrist, the big hand pointed to the figure one, and the little hand indicated the numeral twelve. Usually she ate her dinner very slowly and listened attentively to everything that came to be discussed at the table, but today she had hurried away. Out here under the rugged old elm she could be alone with her thoughts.

It was a queer feeling to be "sixteen." Suddenly she wanted to laugh and cry at the same time, yet, oddly enough, her heart was as light as the fairy clouds that floated serenely above. She contemplated them for a while, and now they seemed to her like little fairy boats frolicking on a placid sea of tender blue. The April day matched her mood, and she tossed her blond curls with a saucy jerk and lay laughing in the sunlight. This gradual transition from childhood to glorious womanhood was a trying episode in a woman's life. She wondered vaguely what Jimmy was doing at this moment. Tonight she would arrange her beautiful hair like the model's in the new beauty book that she had borrowed from Emily. Maybe her hair would look better in bangs—or how about a "Mae Murray?" "Dear me!"