

1. The Dog Food War



Sam woke up on Monday morning in a terrible mood. It had been a bad weekend. For two days Joan and Bob had tried to feed Sam dog food.

Sam sighed. *They should know better.*

To make things worse, Jennie's family had gone away for the weekend. Ten-year-old Jennie Levinsky was Sam's next-door neighbor and her best friend. Joan and Bob had hired Jennie to dog-sit Sam when they were at work. Jennie would have given Sam some real food.

Sam hopped off the spare bed. In the kitchen she glowered at Joan and Bob as they packed their lunches and rushed to work.

"I'll leave you some Liver Delight, Sam."

Joan put a dog bowl on the floor, grabbed her briefcase and dashed out the door.

Don't do me any favors, thought Sam savagely.

The door shut and Sam was alone. She eyed the dog food with disgust. *Let it rot.*



As the hours ticked by, Sam hopped off the sofa every once in a while and paced the house. *I'm bored. I'm a fabulous detective with no case. And I'm so hungry, I'm half dead.* Sam sighed loudly. *My life has hit bottom.*

At last the key turned in the lock and Jennie leaned around the living room doorway. She dropped her schoolbag in the hall. “Hi, Sam! I missed you! Beth’s coming in a few minutes.”

Sam looked dolefully at her friend. *You'll have to take me to the hospital soon. I'm starving. I'm going to faint.*

Jennie giggled.

Sam’s thoughts rang in Jennie’s head in a

hollow, echoing way. It was just like talking. No one else could hear Sam. Not even Jennie's best friend, Beth Morrison. Sam had told Jennie she had a special gift. *I can always tell when someone's got it. Most dogs are too stupid to notice.*

Jennie gave Sam a huge hug, but Sam just sniffed. *Go and look at the glop in my bowl.*

Jennie peered into the kitchen and wrinkled her nose. The Liver Delight was hard and crusty. "Ugh. That doesn't smell very good."

Not good? They make that stuff out of cat guts. And gopher guts and bits of run-over skunks off the road. Nobody should eat it!

Just then the doorbell rang. Beth ran into the living room and threw her arms around Sam's big neck. Sam slurped at Beth's fluffy red hair.

After a few licks, Sam stared at Jennie again. *Take me to your house, Jennie. I need food.*



When the three friends got to Jennie's house,

her thirteen-year-old brother, Noel, opened the door. “How’s Samantha the walking mop?” He grinned at Sam.

Shut up, Oaf. Sam tried to push past Noel. LummoX. Pimply faced teenager. Tell him to get out of my way, Jennie. I need some serious snacks.

Noel grabbed his baseball and headed out the door. “Mom and Dad are working at the drugstore till five thirty, Jennie. Call me if you need me.”

Sam marched straight to the kitchen and scratched at the cupboards. *How about cheese puffs with ketchup? I need sardines with ice cream. Hurry! I’m going to pass out.*

Jennie rooted through the fridge.

“Yuck!” cried Beth when Jennie poured ketchup over mint ice cream.

Jennie giggled as she filled bowls with leftovers. “Sam says she’s starving. She had a rough weekend trying not to eat dog food.”

Rough is not the word. It was hideous.

Sam slurped and chomped with loud happy smacks. *Whew! This is better.*

Upstairs in Jennie's room, Sam climbed up on the bed and belched. She lay back on Jennie's pillows.

She was just starting to doze when she thought of something that made her perk up. *Hey! I almost forgot. You're dog-sitting me this weekend.*

Jennie nodded. "Yup. You're staying at my house while Joan and Bob are away."

The hair over Sam's eyes lifted. *I hope you're planning to buy me loads of treats.*

"Don't worry, Sam." Jennie winked at Beth. "I promise I'll feed you good stuff."

Don't even mention dog food. I want fudge brownies and jelly doughnuts every day.

I haven't had a jelly doughnut in years.