

A Typical Day

Hello, and thank you for coming back to see me! In my last message I promised to tell you what life is like as a writer's dog and I mentioned what a solitary job writing can be. Between eight and three-thirty when the cubs are at school and the alpha male is still at work, I am Wintergreen's sole companion. I therefore see the things that no one else sees -- the days when she gets homesick, her struggles with writer's block, the cabin fever that plagues her when a deadline is looming and she is tied to her desk. Because of this, it is my job to demand love and attention from her all day long so that she does not get lonely.

There are many ways I do this...

First and foremost, I'm cute.

I am a six-year-old dog and yet when I put my ears back and look at her with big puppy-dog eyes, I am quite frankly the cutest thing she has ever seen. She cannot help but cease her typing and turn in her swivelling chair to pet me. But this is not enough, because no matter how cute I am or how soft my ears are, she will eventually return to the black plastic thing that she calls a "computer."



Therefore, I move on to technique number two, whine to go outside. Wintergreen is fiercely protective of her carpets and hence will get up and let me out into the back garden. Usually, I have no business to attend to at all. So I sniff around a bit, identify where the neighbourhood cat has trespassed (the scoundrel) and then trot inside and ask for a Schmacko dog treat.

Once, she has cleaned the mud off my paws (I like to dance through the

flowerbeds), given me a treat and refilled my water bowl, she again returns to her tapping, this time with many frustrated sighs and mumblings. Those sighs of unhappiness break my heart. She is obviously missing her pack and so I step up my efforts to comfort her with my presence. I sit beside her chair and look up at her mournfully. Wintergreen is a soft-hearted human and will stop what she is doing to comfort me. But I must be careful not to overplay this ploy or



she will grow impatient and tell me to "go settle down." It is usually at this stage that she resorts to ignoring my antics as she stares resolutely at her computer.

I am a labrador of good and noble breeding with a pedigree ranging from my parents Kenmilfore Morning Dew and Hamford Pine of Buttershall back through refined generations to Glen Bonnie of Conneywarren and Brackenbird Holly. I therefore will not tolerate being ignored. When Wintergreen refuses me her attention, I drop the F-bomb.

The Fur Bomb, or F-bomb as I like to call it, is easily achieved. I slink off to her room and hop up on the alphas' bed and then I roll around on the duvet until I have comprehensively covered it in fur. This little touch of vengeance will become apparent when the alphas go to bed. Wintergreen will pull her covers up under her chin and will be simultaneously hit in the face with a cloud of airborne dog hair. As I stretch out at their feet, I



will smile to myself as she coughs and splutters in the dark and spends the next half hour picking my fur out of her teeth.

But I digress. Once, I have corrected Wintergreen's errant behaviour, I fall silent and she assumes that I have gone to sleep. Then comes the master stroke: the bad dream. I will first issue a few pitiful little whines followed by one long low howl that sounds like something out of *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. My alpha female is wise in the way of dogs and will recognise that howl as the mournful wolf's cry of an animal separated from its pack. And she will take pity on me. She will come to me and stroke my ears and scratch my belly. She will gather up her papers and pens and notebooks and the black plastic thing and take it all downstairs so that I can snuggle beside her on the couch as she works. And she will believe that now, finally, she can work uninterrupted.

But my job is not done. I must continue to comfort her by sustaining a feeling of closeness. And so I insist that she types with one hand while petting me with the other. Whenever she tries to resume her two-handed tapping, I whine and paw at her arm. If this does not get her attention, I have one last trick. First I lay there and think of sausages, bacon, beef -- anything to get my mouth watering. Then I take a long, luxurious stretch and settle back down with my head on her hands, effectively slobbering all over the keyboard.

Her protestations of "Oh Bailey! Yuck!" do not fool me. I know that she appreciates my efforts. A few moments later, the front door bursts open and the cubs tumble in with "Mom! We're home!" and my job is done. I am a very good dog indeed.

