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The Supper

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The Supper

The children snorted when their mother lay the family dog, roasted with an apple-stuffed mouth, on the table before them.

"We can't eat this dog, Mom," Bethsadie said first. "Jesus!" She turned sideways in her chair after slapping down a fork.

"She's right, Mom," stated Charlie flatly. "We've had Barko a long time. We can't just eat him now."

"That goes for me, too," said Turbo.

Mrs. Dolsmith watched as each face spoke. After Turbo had put his comment in, she turned to Lisa and little Freddie, but the two youngest said nothing. They just looked at Barko, apple-stuffed, on the table before them. They looked as they might look if their mom had sold the family station wagon and brought home a Gremlin in its place.

"Well, gee, kids," Mrs. Dolsmith said as she wrung her hands in a gesture of conciliatory guilt, "I really am sorry about Barko, but we simply ran out of food. Look," she said. She went to the cupboards and exposed a dozen bare shelves. "And I couldn't let you starve."

"Yeah, but why Barko? Couldn't you have gotten Horace," said Bethsadie, indignant. Horace was the dog next door.

"Horace is getting old," said Mrs. Dolsmith.

"Yeah, but Barko watched TV with us when we came home from school," said Charlie. "It'd be like eating Lisa."

Lisa nodded her head with blank eyes still held by the supper.

"Yeah," said Bethsadie. The indignation was not at all subsiding.

"Fine! Okay! Next time I run out of food, Fine! Great! I'll let you starve," said Mrs. Dolsmith.

"Great. Just don't cook Puss," said Beth as she got up and headed towards her bedroom door.

"Speaking of Puss, where is she?" asked Turbo. He eyed his mother suspiciously as he too slipped into his bedroom.

Then the other children got up and headed towards the bedrooms. It was like a child migration. And Mrs. Dolsmith was left in the kitchen alone, sitting over a basted Barko. Soft tears welled up in her tired eyes, as she silently mouthed the words, "I tried so hard."

A few moments later she rose and picked up the basting pan that held the freshly cooked dog. She went to the kitchen door and opened it. There in the dark autumn evening she carried the roasted Barko to his house next to the garage. She pulled the burlap flap back that covered the door and placed the dog - apple, pan and all - inside. Then she walked away.

David S. Marshall