

I'm one of those people who, whenever I get the feeling that everything's fallen into place, that home couldn't feel cosier, that I couldn't be more sure of myself in doing my work, I simply have to burst the bubble of security I've created for myself. And this spring it's a case of déjà-vu all over again...

We now have a puppy. Or rather: I now have a puppy. Having lived with two dogs for an uninterrupted period of 15 years, I knew this time that however much the kids and anyone else in the family might promise to take the little tyke for walks, that would all be forgotten within a week. Reality would prevail. Which is to say me. But what bringing up a puppy actually means is coming back to me now, with surprising clarity, from a time that seems so long ago – another world almost, when I was still working at Eesti Päevaleht, and Ludwig careered into my life: a russet take on Eedu, the white setter we have today.

I remember when I decided to set myself up in life on my own for the first time. I had an interesting job that paid well. At that point I was convinced I'd never want another job – the one I had offered plenty of challenges, the team I worked with were a dream and I felt right at home in the world of the media. That sense of control, of self-determination, that you have everything you need and can do anything you want, is a fantastic feeling to have at any point in your life. Over time, though, I came to realise that I didn't enjoy living alone. Precisely because you have no one to share that sense of happiness and security with. And what was the point of it? There's nothing interesting about cooking for one. In the end it even started to bother me – almost embarrass me – that my dream apartment, in a building brimming with history, was so clean and tidy all the time! But as the Estonian proverb goes, 'where need is greatest, help is closest at hand'. I had to find someone who'd make a mess of my rooms and leave dirty footprints in the hall. Someone to feed and someone to take care of. So I got a dog: an Irish setter that was a red-haired bundle of pure energy.

And that's when Life, for me, began. I'd come home to find shoes that had been mauled to within an inch of their life; remote controls that had been chewed up and spat out; overturned vases and flowers strewn across the floor. However, it wasn't until he decided to de-wallpaper the apartment and eat a hole in the timber staircase that I questioned the wisdom of my decision. Of course, being a hunting dog, he needed to get out every now and then and run himself ragged, roll in the mud and dig things up. And there's not much opportunity for that in the city, even if you head out to the leafier areas outside the centre.

Luckily, my mum and my sister helped me a lot during those early years, so we all managed to

stay on good terms. By the time we moved to Keila-Joa Ludwig had become very much the well-behaved four-legged friend, and over the years he became beloved of everyone in my family.

Nowadays, as I pace about the place with a roll of paper towels in hand and a frown etched into my brow, I realise that even if I have nothing to get me up early in the morning and could sleep in if I wanted to, a morning like that is not one I'll see any time soon. And it all comes back to me from way back then. Knowing that you need to spend at least a couple of hours outdoors every day, Monday through Sunday, whatever the weather. Your ears permanently attuned to the slightest sound that might suggest Eedu's gotten his teeth into something he shouldn't have, or is doing his business somewhere he really oughtn't. So far he's claimed a book, a sandwich one of our advisers had left on a windowsill and a chocolate cake (downed without even touching the sides, more or less) one of the army lads who was celebrating his birthday had left on our dining table. I guess I'll have to rethink where to remove the rugs and where to erect the barricades so as to preserve at least one untouched corner...

Whatever I'm doing, though, I'm followed by the biggest pair of brown eyes with the longest white eyelashes you've ever seen. They radiate with gratitude for every glance, every word, every pat on the head. As soon as I sit down, my 18-kilo 'baby' jumps up on my lap, wraps his paws around my neck and starts licking my ears. When the president sits down at his desk, Eedu takes up his place on the carpet in front of it, as if on official watch. And believe you me, he could growl for his country. And bark at Toomas Sildam!

So then, Life, for me, has been turned on its head once again. But in the best possible way – by a big ball of love. One who reminds you every minute of the day what unconditional love really means, and that it never just springs up of its own accord: you have to work at it, nurture it, be there for it and sometimes worry about it. You have to remember that true love is hard work. You have to give a lot, and give up a lot. And that's true not only of pets, but of children, of our partners, and of God.

Open your heart and welcome the spring with love!