

## **The Family Dog**

**By Andrew Stevens**

The dog's grizzled old muzzle rested on his paw. He watched as the two younger boys flew by, arguing loudly. "I'm not doing it! I did it last night!" shouted one.

"Rock-paper-scissors!" suggested the other.

"No! I told you, I did it last night! *You're* going tonight!"

"Fine. We'll both walk him. Suit yourself!"

"What??? No! There's no reason for two people to go! It's a one person job."

The dog painfully got up, sniffed the leash that was in one of the boy's hands, wagged his tail, and then look up expectantly. But the boys didn't even notice him; they were still arguing. So the old dog limped away, wincing at his sore hips. He went to his favorite person, the mom, who was staring at her screen.

Again, he wagged his tail and looked up expectantly. But the mom just said, "Go lie down. I have nothing for you. Stop begging." Heaving a sigh, the old dog walked back sadly to his bed, tail between his legs, turned around painfully three times and dropped heavily onto the cushion.

The two boys had finally stopped arguing; the dad had intervened and made them both walk the old dog. Up he staggered again from his bed as the two boys complained and argued every single step they took on the walk.

Later that night, when the whole house was silent and still and everyone was asleep, the old dog died peacefully in his slumber.

The next morning the two boys were the first to awake. They walked down the stairs together and found the old dog lying motionless on his bed, dead. The boys immediately started crying. "I wish I had been kinder to him," said the first boy.

"I wish I had enjoyed our walk," said the other.

The mother heard them and came out of her room and stared at the dead dog. Regret washed over her; she realized she had missed an opportunity to teach her kids compassion, and how to love an old dog.