

washing; even scrubbing the floor. He rolled his sleeves up, put an apron on, and fussed around zealously while Emilie sat at the sewing machine, threw her head back and looked out of her workshop, unable to believe what she was seeing.

I kept a list and ordered the different tasks according to urgency. If Emilie asked me to run an errand, I gave this priority. Emilie was soon so convinced the method worked, she no longer bothered asking me to do certain things, but noted on my list herself what she wanted done.

If guests dropped by, I brewed coffee and passed sweet things round, and Emilie explained to the guests how the 'world' had suddenly 'turned upside down' in this household. For a while, nothing made me happier than managing to get the ring cake out of its mould in one piece.

It's said that, in a clearing in a forest, there are two deckchairs, reserved for the couple that has never – not for a moment – regretted meeting. To this day, the deckchairs have remained untaken. I mention this story at my granddaughter's confirmation, with the different generations assembled around the last scraps of our buffet, and Emilie shouts across the hall to me, 'Our names are on those deckchairs, Lukas!'

