



*The*  
**DACHSHUNDS**  
*of*  
*Mama Island*

**FLORENCE V. MAYBERRY**



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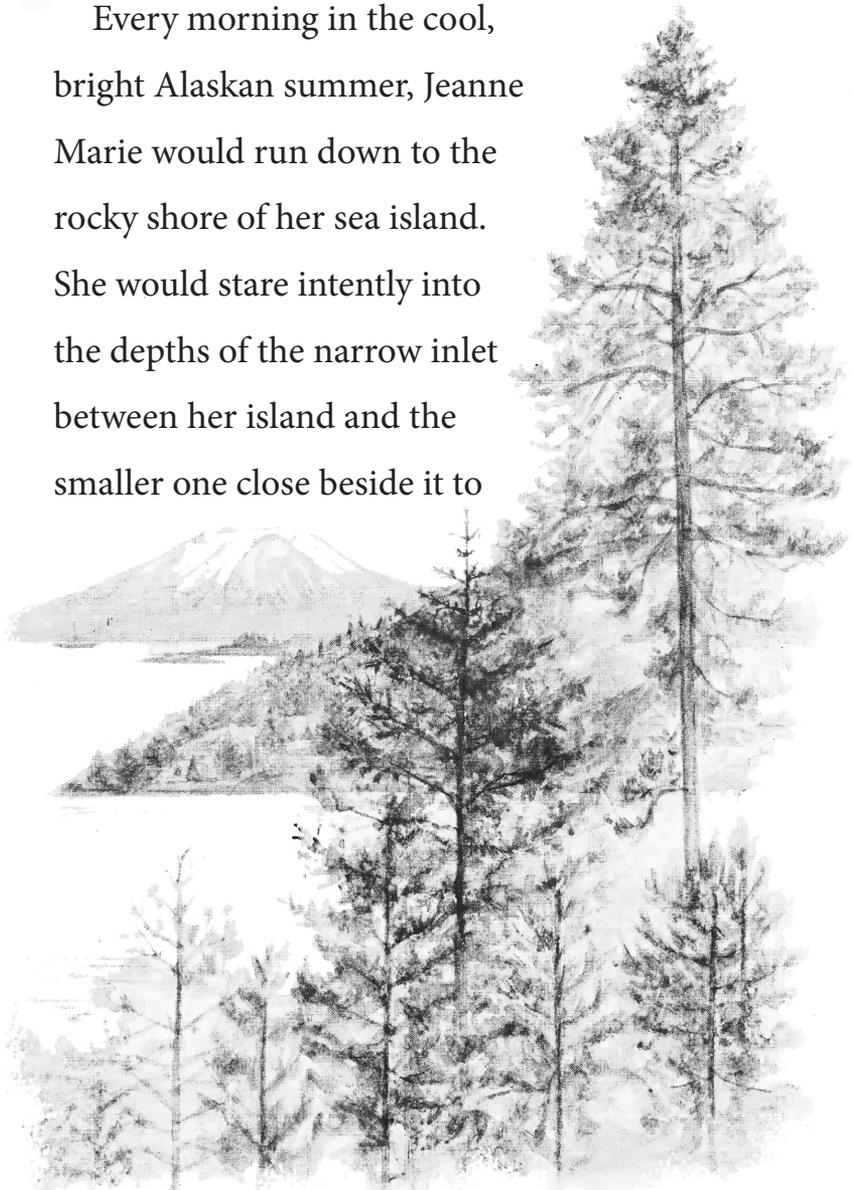
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This unabridged version has updated grammar and spelling.



# Chapter 1

Every morning in the cool, bright Alaskan summer, Jeanne Marie would run down to the rocky shore of her sea island. She would stare intently into the depths of the narrow inlet between her island and the smaller one close beside it to



see if the sea otter was there. The dachshunds shared this ritual. It ended only when school and the chill of fall began. Then Jeanne Marie and her father, snug in parkas, would cross the harbor water in one of their two boats from their home island to the big island of Baranof. On Baranof was the small city of Sitka. When they docked their boat at Sitka, Jeanne Marie would kiss her father goodbye and hurry off to school. And her father would hurry to his newspaper and printing office. It was fun and exciting, this trip every day over the chill water between small wooded islands, most of them inhabited by families who had purchased or homesteaded them.

But the most exciting part, Jeanne Marie thought, was to live on one's very own island as she and her mother and father, Gene and Sue Barrett, did. Neighbors were close on other islands, and Sitka with its stores was only minutes away by boat. It was not lonely. And how free and happy to have a whole island for one's own yard!

On this sparkling day, Jeanne Marie hummed a little tune of happiness as she hopped in and out of the patches of sunlight on her way down the slope to the shore. In back of her, beside her, in front of her were the dachshunds, all nine of them. There were Jack the Giant Killer, Oliver Twist, Tiny Tim, Maedchen, Crumpet, Seal, Fairy, and Herr-und-Frau. Herr-und-Frau were the grown-ups of the crowd, dignified and cautious, who always ran together, sat together, slept together, and who were never called separately.

The dachshunds belled like hounds on a cross-country chase, although this little island just off the shore of Sitka, Alaska, was no more than a quarter of a mile long and half that wide. “Hush, hush! You’ll frighten the otter!” Jeanne Marie cried, knowing it was useless.

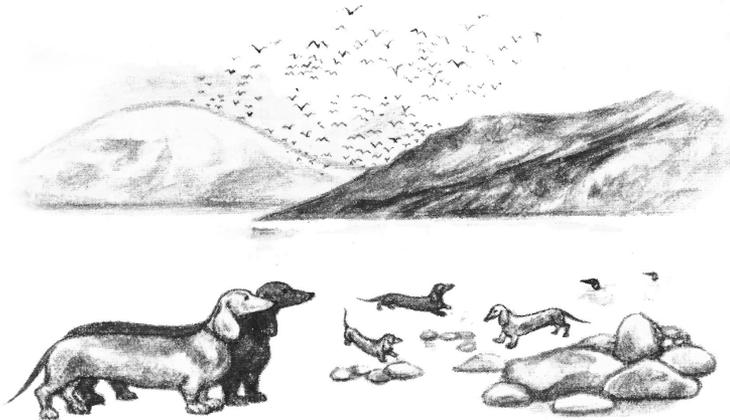
She bounded from patch to patch of the soft, springy muskeg to avoid the rough rocks, noting as she went past brush clumps the bright salmonberries she would pick later.

Suddenly the tall pine trees and the low bush, even the rock croppings, parted like a curtain on a stage. There before Jeanne Marie, but far beyond the inlet, beyond distant islands, seeming to rise out of the Pacific Ocean itself, was Mount Edgecumbe. In the distance, shimmering under the sun, it appeared silver-tipped instead of snowcapped. Always, to Jeanne Marie, it was the lovely silver-crowned Fairy Queen of the Sea. She curtsied low. “Good morning, Fairy Queen!” she called.

It should have been Fairy, shining and light-footed, who stopped and seemed to curtsy, too, and who kissed Jeanne Marie on the cheek to show she understood. Fairy was named for Jeanne Marie’s Fairy Queen Mountain because she was paler in color and daintier than the other dachshunds, except for her twin Maedchen. But Fairy had reached the shore and was darting in frantic search of the otter. It was Maedchen, gaily waving her little withered left front paw, who hopped to Jeanne Marie, pounced low to match her curtsy, and then

leaped so happily to kiss her mistress. Jeanne Marie picked up the eagerly trembling small dog and walked down the rough stone slabs.

The other eight dachshunds lined the shore, roaring a challenge across the inlet to Baby Island. They believed the otter lived on Baby Island and mysteriously appeared and disappeared among its rocks and brush. And it was clear they believed that if they barked loud enough, they would pop him out like a jack-in-the-box.



Baby Island was so small, not much larger than a house sticking out of the sea, that it did not have an official name. Everybody except Jeanne Marie and

her family and close friends called the island “it” or “that.” But when Sue and Gene Barrett had bought their island home, so close beside the neighboring dot of land, Jeanne Marie had been very young, only four. It was difficult for her to say “Winnemucca,” which her home island had been named by its original homesteader, an old Nevada prospector. For a few days, she tried calling it “Mucca.” Then she became entranced by the tiny island beside it. Immediately her island became “Mama Island” and the little one, nestling close, became “Baby Island.” Now that she was more grown-up, nine years old, they still seemed like good names.

Baby Island was perhaps fifty feet distant from Mama Island. The water between was deep, dark green, and icy cold—so cold it seemed impossible that the dachshunds could tolerate its chill. Nor did they often. Only when the sea otter came. Then, with howls of delight, they would plunge after the otter, who promptly plummeted into the depths, then surfaced, then dived. Bewildered by the dives,

but accepting them with hilarious good humor, the dachshunds would swim up and down along the shore of Mama Island. But none of them had yet ventured past the middle of the channel between the islands. The other half of the channel and Baby Island remained unexplored territory.

Only Maedchen, and Jeanne Marie herself, could not swim. Few Alaskan children, born in this cold country of icy water, ever learned to swim. They relied on boats, seamanship, and their outdoor trained vigor to protect them.

Maedchen would hop into the shallow water near the shore, on her three good legs, and bell with the others as the otter surfaced and dived. Then she would turn to look at Jeanne Marie and then at the other dogs who were swimming so merrily. Her eyes would suddenly become sad and ashamed, as though she had failed Jeanne Marie. Slowly she would come out of the water, trembling slightly with the cold, and sit up and beg. This Maedchen did beautifully, patting the little helpless paw with

the good front one. Always as Jeanne Marie smiled at Maedchen's charm, Maedchen seemed to smile back. Her slanted dark eyes with the smudges around their rims, like eyebrow pencil put on in a thick, soft line, had such love in them that they made Jeanne Marie's heart feel as though it were pinched.

Now Jeanne Marie laughed at the merry commotion of the dachshunds and snuggled Maedchen. The little dog gazed adoringly and gratefully at her for the special attention. "Oh, I love you!" Jeanne Marie whispered fiercely. And she admitted inside herself, so the other dogs would not know, that she loved Maedchen best of all.

When she loved Maedchen like this, it always made her want to cry. For then she remembered her secret, a secret so terrible that not even her mother knew all of it.

She was the one who had hurt Maedchen's paw.