

THE SIX-LEGGED DOG RETRIEVES A STICK

If you didn't see the six-legged dog it doesn't matter. He mostly lay in the corner, mad with magic anger. When I watched him I stopped living. It was then, at that moment, or another, the keeper threw a stick and the dog went after it, on four legs, the other two flapping behind, useless, which made one girl shriek with laughter. After that, I quit shaving; razors seemed too sharp to me, and daydreaming felt like a nod to a future all used up.

How different everything might have been if that dog had only four legs! My attention would have been on the drunk woman, or the man who could put his entire fist in his mouth, who was also drunk: he kept kissing her neck, following her around the fair. Or I might have noticed you. But that was not the case. My attention was squarely on the six-legged dog. It retrieved the stick, and looked back at us, and that was the whole show.

You never saw the dog. You were looking at me while I was remembering how you were most yourself when swimming: slicing the water with each stroke; how you tried to keep pace with me as I walked on the deck beside the pool. You were neither fantastic nor miserable when doing laps, the funny way you breathed, your mouth cocked as though yawning. When I look back I remember how I thought at the time you were moving too slowly to save me, but I realize now you were moving as fast as you could.