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The Dog's Life

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THE DOG'S LIFE

The dog comes to the house, sits outside; she is black and white and patient in her bones, her eyes. I say, "Wait," she waits. I say, "Go," she waits. When I try to walk her home, she skidaddles ahead of me, kicking up her heels, a sense of urgent joy in her gait. But she isn't going home. "Dog," I say, "Go home." She has a narrow head and long legs, something of the greyhound in her, and fleet. I like how quiet she is, how nothing more than my presence appeases and interests her, and I think I'd like to be a dog sometime, to follow around some dull or interesting human, no matter which, to be silent and attentive and naked without guile, or ambition, to feel the breeze I press behind me as I push, no am propelled wherever the hell, to be without distraction. To wait, to want nothing more than to wait, to be content with waiting, sitting on my haunches outside a lighted house.

Sometimes, when I get into my car and head onto Interstate 91, I imagine myself going a great distance, south or west. I feel the unimpeded motion, the absence of plan, the lightness of unscheduled weeks, anonymous motels with bad beds.

I could pick a town the way this dog picked me, I could pull in and stay, set my butt on some bench in a park if the weather be good, and watch the locals stroll, or argue or carry bags of groceries. With nothing to do, what in the world would I do? Would I talk to the man with gray hair and sad eyes? Or the kid who's lost inside the yo-yo he hasn't figured out how to use. I might show him how to roll it up fast, put it to sleep, flip it. I might eat French toast with fake syrup and hi-test coffee and sausage. I might buy a pale blue dress that's terribly outdated and pretend not to speak English. The possibilities are endless. The mute dreaminess of such a state infuses like alcohol. North America is made for rootless obedience to the road, anonymous encounters, for the dog's life with its constant and silent loyalty to something unnamed yet easily stumbled upon.