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Dog Days

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DOG DAYS

Someday we're going to walk in the ancient, twin footprints found in Chauvet Cave. We're going to follow a boy and his dog deep into darkness, hoping feelings of kinship will illuminate life at the end of the tunnel. I wonder what the Romans meant when they said man is a wolf to man, knowing the she-wolf of Romulus and Remus was kind. Not even the sunrise can clarify. Maybe that's why we say morning has broken, since we refuse to see the light, no matter how many times we learn our lesson. Listen, even the werewolf suffers according to a cycle. Ptolemy saw a bigger moon on the rise than at the zenith. Stories become memorable in moments of transition, like chicks un-shelling, as if they were finished fighting a war. Everything makes a dramatic entrance but even the big stars burn out slow. Toddlers find it funny, walking in their parents' shoes. Things change, Ovid says, and yet, things feel the same. Fiddler crabs play love songs with comically large claws. I'm dying to see your handprint like a bruise around my heart. Every mark is like a sunset throwing the same old shadows around the chiming steeple. Maybe the dusk rings our bells because we want to howl. Dogs can hear the heartbeat of a fetus. Anubis has the ear of a golden jackal. The scale he carries judges our hearts in terms of featherweights. Maybe we need a Greco-Roman boxer, a trainer to wrap our crooked fingers, a left hook mystifying every forehead. It makes no difference how many decisions have been made with knucklebones. What follows is birdsong. We believe this is the sound of sense being knocked into our heads. It makes no difference how many coyotes have been fooled by killdeer playing lame. We often approach each other like we have broken wings. Maybe people are like birds, hatching schemes. Sometimes we just go cuckoo, stealing other people's dreams. How else do you explain birdbrains in our midst? Is it love that dares us

not to fly? We have to see the difference between the falcons
and the hounds. Everything I say from now on is in praise
of man's best friend. You might say civilization is a complex
of fenced-in yards. We're all just dogs making the rounds.
From the distance of Canis Major, our world is less trouble
than a flea. I don't know if it's worthwhile to remember
John Donne. There's leftover pork chops on the countertop.
There's the high-pitched frequency of your car
when you're on your way home. Nothing really happens
until you arrive. Even the television seems determined
to play commercials. There's the sentence of our thinking—
syntax, which is the muzzle that tempers our emotions.
Maybe dogs need us to say what's on their minds, to hold
in one hand nothing but an open palm, to know the longing
the heart inspires in one who drops the ball, in one who sits
by your feet, speechless, waiting for you to give the word.