

BAD DOG

by Molly Giles

WHISKERY TUB OF MUSCLE with flicks of spit and slime shot from spotted tongue and slick pink dick. Sly beggar eyes, wheedler's grin. The forelegs stiff in bossy supplication, the butt high, the propeller whirl of tail, the dance in place at the door, the stench of slept-in, spit-on hair and hide, the yellow sulphur farts, the bared teeth, the fetid breath, the slobber, the snuffle, the hurry up yip. Let him out! Let him in! Don't leave him here, secure in the house, warm in the car, safe in the yard! Take him with you! Let him dog you! Take the stick! Throw the stick! Take the stick again! Throw the stick again! Walk him! Not here! There! Not there! Unleash him, free him, see him circle, snarl, fight, bite, pee in six places, chase cars, attack strangers, spook horses, unseat cyclists, break the necks of sunning cats, gulp dead birds, roll in cow shit, chase squirrels up power lines, pack with Scout and Maggie and Bobo to bring down a fawn or a city child alone on the corner. Pick his dung up. Sack it. Schlep it. Pet him! Praise him! Feed him! Feed him horsemeat, cowmeat, chickenmeat, pigmeat, ratmeat, catmeat, zoomeat, roadkill, dogmeat! Gulp! Gone! Watch him gnaw the menstrual goo from your twelve year old's gym shorts, slop the snot off the baby's face, dig up the dahlias, bury the hiking shoe, chew the ankles of the antique bedpost, hump the limp leg of the Alzheimer patient, pull your guests' dinner off the dining room table, knock the vase down, flee as china and crystal crash to the tiles, plead guilty with hope-stricken eyes. Bad dog, good dog, come dog. Sit. Beg. Heel. Roll over. Down. Clown! you say. Comrade! Confidante! Courter! How cute he is! How clever, how comic. Look how he loves me! But how can he love you? He doesn't know you! He doesn't know you lied to your lover, stole from your mother, slapped your sister, abused your child, cheated your boss, falsified your taxes, perjured yourself in court, slashed your enemy's tires, slept with your best friend's spouse, betrayed your business partner, vandalized your neighbor, hit a pedestrian, slandered a co-worker – he does not know that you have behaved, all your life, in fact, like a dog – nor does he care. His interests are not your interests. His thoughts are not your thoughts. His dreams are of hunt, quarry, catch, and kill. His strange brain is at secret work in your house all night. Is it your house? Whose ghost startles your dog on the stair? Why does he bark at the mirror? What does he hear when the kitchen clock stills? Those claw marks high on the lintel of the locked door – where did those come from? And the flash of his moonsharp teeth when you call? The grin of an exile, far from his kind, slavish, obedient, biding his time.

