

Catching the Dog
279 words

Having twisted himself from the collar, the dog bolted toward the field barking and yipping with unrestrained pleasure, the crying human voice behind him fading with every leap across the brown, damp grass. The animal was always a hundred feet or so from the girl, who had given up running, and her only course of action was to wait and hope the dog would not go further toward the other side of the field, where the hum of cars on the service road beckoned.

She said his name, first sharply, then with a soft sob in her voice. After a minute, she stared at the collar still at the end of the leash in her left hand, repeating the name like a broken mantra she had to keep remembering.

Every few seconds, the dog would look back at the girl, as if checking to see if she was still nearby, perhaps wondering why she did not find the grasshoppers and other winged things so necessary to smell. He didn't know she was fourteen, bitter that her brother got out of walking the dog when she too had homework, and sad she didn't have a boyfriend. He forgot, as each insect crossed his scent path, the tender sound of his name when she said it, even in exasperation.

She thought she would cry, but didn't. She gripped the collar and sighed as she rubbed it against her neck.

The girl was sitting in a tuft of dandelions when the beast returned. She was absently holding the stalk of one she did not remember pulling. The dog regarded her with a puzzled expression, a large monarch dangling from his untroubled mouth.