

DOG

The dogs would wander in from the street –
Tired they were but happy, tongue lolling out
Like a wet, rough rag, as they would trot to the
Music that nobody else but they could hear.

Lean, bristly hair, some ears notched, paws
Roughened by concrete, these were city dogs
Urban dogs, sometimes converged in packs,
Often in twos or threes. Occasionally, a lone

Scout would spring ahead, crossing the traffic,
Avoiding that car, that truck, in the narrowest
Of margins, unfazed by the car horn honk, the human
Shouts of "Frickin' dog! Get outta there! Scram!"

This time the scout is female, unusual really,
Teats still enlarged by her litter, recently gone
With the pack, nowhere to be seen. She wanders
Across the highway, to the campus, the sun glinting

Off her eyes and playing like butterflies among
Flowers on the lean curve of her back. She regards
The close-cropped grass with tentative flicks of her
Tongue, rubs her side against one prodigious tree.

Life is good, the music in her head says, *life is good*.
She slips past the thin morning traffic of cars arriving
To work – not many this fine day, not many this early
Time on this fine day. The air is crisp, cool; winter's

Coming. She can smell it, and if she is afraid of those
Cold nights, those lean nights of little food as the world
Goes to sleep a bit, she does not say. But, yes, she
Is an urban dog, a city dog, and trash, many mountains

Of trash, will always ensure that her belly never feels the
Pangs of hunger that much, will ensure that she never
Worries about the pangs of hunger in her litter's belly
That much. She makes her way through the maze of

Parking lots, potholed, leaf-strewn, and sits in the middle
Of one of them. She sits there as a car pulls up, a little
Late for work, and moves only a bit as it arches away
From her, like a bird avoiding a fence, a wall. It parks

Aways down from her, and the driver, harried, yet takes
The time to regard this dog in the middle of the parking lot.
Human eyes regard dog eyes. Dog eyes regard human eyes.
She leans up and trots to a nearby tree and reclines. The

Human makes a little sigh, turns away from the dog, and
Marching to another tune, a human tune, strides its way
Into the building, far away from urban dogs, prodigious trees,
And the sun glinting off of lean backs like butterflies in the field.