



Walk the dog

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Walk the dog

Her dog keeps running around in circles and she tells him to stop but he keeps on going. Over and over again. Will he drown in not knowing? Is he looking for his mother? Or is this his simple way of dealing with day and night; and again, over and over again.

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She wakes up and hears a strange sound coming from the hallway. Did she forget to feed them? The marmots. She was probably outside of her mind last night. Let's take a look. She feels guilty, strange, they must be starving. She prepares breakfast for them: three fried eggs and a handful of kidney beans. While it's cooling down, she finds herself some clothes. She puts on a purple dress with yellow straps on the back. Carefully, she takes the plate and tiptoes to the front door. The sound of the whining marmots cross her heart. While she opens the door to the shared hallway, the light coming from the small window hits her feet like a spotlight. The marmots are sitting right in front of the door. Whining, they must be starving! She puts the plate on the ground and finds joy in watching them eat.

This joy is mixed with quite a lot of guilt. She could see herself in the reflection of her tears. She came home early in the morning, and woke up late. She secretly enjoyed the sound of the winning marmots for hours.

Though, one day, the neighbor from upstairs came up to her. He spoke in a loud voice: 'Please, stop putting the plates in the shared hallway. All the food is rotten now and it infects all your neighbors.' The lady looked with her eyes down, she could not say a word. She could feel her muscles shrink and her lungs being empty. Her body doesn't allow her to speak. She looks at the plates. The man is right, it is rotten. Beans, eggs, rice...

Walk the dog

The apartment

The hallway

The dog

The woman

Getting the dog, for her, was because she needed something to care for. Care about. Like the marmots in the hallway. The marmots were there, whining for attention. Although one day they disappeared, she kept everything going and fed them. Through time there was a pile of plates with rotten food in the shared hallway and her neighbors complained and said she was crazy. Outside of her mind. But nevertheless, she kept feeding them.

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Her bedside lamp is crying, it's a sharp and narcotic sound. He cries in a new voice, it sounds like he is growing up. She counts the age of her dog in weeks, it makes the time pass by faster. 18 weeks, 19 weeks, 20 weeks, she lost track. Looking at the pictures from when the dog was still a baby, his head was round, his brain and eyes and mouth all squished together. And his ears are hanging low in his neck, out of proportion. Sometimes when he sleeps his ears lay upwards, she can look straight into his head. Quickly, she closes the ear, all the loud noises from the outside world will never fit into his small baby head.

The woman talks to the dog, in soft and warm voice:

“I take care of you, I will warm you, I will never forget you, I will always be by your side, I will be humble, I will love you forever, I will protect you, I will always support you, I take care of you, I will care for you.”

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He will change the world some day. At least for her, this is the case. The dog wakes her in the morning, and the dog brings joy and laughter. But what's more to it? In 1957, they sent Laika into space knowing that he wouldn't return. Laika was a small stray dog with a weight of 5kg. The master of the program chose the dog as his target for several reasons; one of them being the fact that he never had a dog before, so he couldn't feel the pain of losing one. Secretly, he brought Laika to his home the day before departure. To give him the best care he could give. The dog didn't have a choice. He didn't choose this path. He got poisoned food for seven days but he had died before that so the feeding machine kept going and the dog food got all over his dead body for 6 hours. His body was burned in the atmosphere 5 months later and after Laika even 48 other dogs followed him to space. *1

Maybe this exact story tells the story of the woman. When she goes outside without him, she forgets about all the feelings she has had for him. And when she comes home, to the dog, she starts to feel bad about having been away too long and she promised to care for him. What if she arrives home and the dog is gone?

“I will never forget you. I am going away now, for a minute and I will leave you here but I will take care of you and love you forever”

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When the woman has been away for too long, the dog starts barking with a high voice. And his barking hurts your ears. He will not quit until she loves him again and takes care of him. She has to forget about herself. And love love love. The heart of the dog. Consists of selfishness and his lady's love. The heart of a dog, should be warmed by a fireplace. And only the warmest fireplace on earth will do the job.

And so, she doesn't go outside during the day. And pretends to always be around. And he can trust her, he will always be by her side.

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There she lays, she sits on the edge of her bed, sad and crying. How did the look in his eyes hurt her so much? And the dog? He wants more, more of it. He pulls the leash with all the power he has. More food, more walks, more play, more sleep, more time, more love. In the morning she looks at him and he looks at her. Why can't he talk? How do you know what he really needs? Suddenly, he started crying as well. So they sit, they lay on her bed, sad and crying. The woman wants to shout but she doesn't want to infect his good energy with her frustration.

The cry of a dog. Sounds dissatisfied, soft, a small whine. But his eyes tell the whole story.

'Is your puppy whining day and night? Like raising a new baby, puppies cry and whine to communicate their thoughts and feelings with their new family. Unfortunately, they don't speak the same language as their human roommates, so to get their point across, you'll hear a lot of dogs whimpering, whining, yelping and even crying.

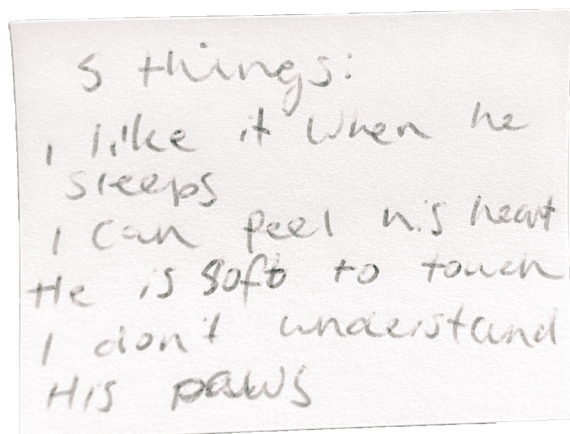
*As much as you love the newest addition to your family, it's very frustrating to listen to a puppy whining all day, or even worse, throughout the night when you wanted to rest from your busy day. After days of this behavior, everyone in your house ends up tired and stressed out, and no one wants that.'**2

The woman grabs the dog, with both hands, holding tight. She wants to hurt him, to really make him feel something. To silent him. And with holding him, and thinking of hurting him, she starts crying even louder. She brings her hands to her heart and carries the dog like a baby. She cries so loud. The eyes of the dog change, innocence. Guilt. They hold on.

The day is gray and the curtains wave from the fresh air entering the apartment. In the corner opposite from the window stands the TV. The light coming from it turns the whole room into a bright blue color. On the television there is a woman kissing a dog, her dog. She looks at the dog with pride, love in her eyes. And the dog looks like he is in love too. In love with the woman.*3 In the appartment the woman lays underneath the window. Her dog sits infront of her. Staring at her, waiting.

“Why don’t I love you? Why don’t I love you like I should?” Says the woman.

*‘Write a list of things you like about your dog. Look for five things you do like about your dog and write them down.’ *4*



5 things:
I like it when he
sleeps
I can feel his heart
He is soft to touch
I don't understand
His paws

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“I will feed you, I will walk with you, I will tuck you in, I will carry you, I will sing for you, I will talk to you, I will play with you, I will never leave you alone anymore, I will run with you, I will let you sleep in the night when I come home late,

I will!!!!!!”

It is midday and the sun hits her room. She didn't talk for a couple of hours, and again her body is aching, forcing her to speak. Her body wants words, spoken out loud. What happens to the silence when it is not meant to be. What happens with silence in the room when your brain keeps talking to your mouth and the words just don't make it into the real world? Why is this bright light coming from the window burning her eyes? Suddenly, she hears a squeaking sound entering the apartment. She has to move her legs, arms, hands and follow the sound. The marmots are asking for something. Squeaking is their way of communicating.

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Dissatisfied, her dog sits in front of her. With his big dark eyes, he stares at her. She knows what he wants. He wants to go outside, play and run. But the woman doesn't move. She lays on her bed, determined to not go outside today. Slowly the focus of the dog starts to crimp, his head starts to lay on the ground. His eyes close. The dream of a dog. In his dream you can hear a little whine. Slowly moving his body, turning to his back. Suffering and unhappy sounds leaving his body. On the face of the woman something changes, her selfishness grows onto the dog and the woman has a small satisfied smile on her face. Happy she won this fight.

The dream of a dog...

'Dogs dream about daily experiences, and similarly to humans, these may often seem more creative and slightly strange in comparison to what actually occurred. Experts therefore theorize that dogs dream not in a logical way, but more visually about what they find interesting and the things that they are emotionally attached to. Since dogs are generally extremely attached to their human owners, it's likely your dog is dreaming of your face, your smell and of pleasing or annoying you.'

*5

And the silence comes back. She sits in the corridor facing her dog. The silence reminds her of the dream she had last night. The dream where she suddenly looked down at her feet, she started shouting at her feet. All words mixed together. In the middle of the night, outside. Without shoes, without socks. Nothing could compare to the pain she had. Her heart was in her throat and because she screamed so loud she could only hear silence around her.

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'High-pitched or unusual sounds, including kissy-noises or whistles.' *6

The woman is trying to invent a new language that they could use to understand each other. Shouting was no use. Talking in a soft voice was no use. So now, she *tjilppps* and *crrrkts* and lets the air go through her lips, a quiet sound in high small tones and the dog responds. He reacts with his whole body. He makes jumps and circles with his little legs. He says yes and no and he wants everything all at once.

When she first saw her dog, he was deaf. He didn't respond to any sound. Although the ears of a dog are way more sensitive to sounds. When her puppy was born, she visited everyday to see him. She left her apartment for him. In the first days the dog wasn't really a dog. He looked more like a misgrown bird, as if he came from the egg of a bird. He couldn't really do anything, but stumble and drink. The whine was, like the dog, way softer and smaller. He had a high voice. She already gave him a name and was repeating it over and over to the small newborn dog. But of course he didn't respond at all, he was busy with drinking and tried to keep everything going. Growing bigger and bigger.

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The woman went to the dog everyday for 56 days. Her care and worry started growing everyday. Most of the time she couldn't really hold him. The dog was busy with his own plans. His own mother, and his brothers and sisters. At this point the dog was really his own. It looked like he was the only one with power in his life. After 56 days the woman could take him home. It was her time to care for him, to treat him, to let him grow and learn. She had the power to pet him and care for him when she needed to. She had the power to let him be by her side.

As the days pass by and her mind turns inside out. She feeds the dog, she cares for him, she is humble. She looks into his tiny eyes and doesn't know whether to laugh or to cry. Like they are in a waiting game. At this point, the outside world is as abstract as it can be. She waits. And waits. As if her mind turned blank.

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In the evenings she puts the dog in his cage. They sleep separately. She starts to sleep and in her dreams she falls into a reflection of herself. She feels a tongue slide down her leg, and another tongue in her ear. They collect the sweat. She wants to get up, but she can't move. She realizes that shouting won't work so she whispers. No response. After a while, the tongues start to feel dry. They took all her sweat but they urge for more. They start to move to her mouth but all of a sudden, they stop. They hear her quiet whisper, which maybe sounds more like a whine. And there she lays, back in control and back in her real body. Her tears keep falling from her cheeks into the bed. Her whole body is shaking, that's how scared she is. She takes the dog out of his cage. And there they lay. His body feels warm on her naked body. She starts to get calmer, it feels like this moment could last forever.

*'Let your dog get used to simply having wet feet. Don't move out of the shallows until your dog seems happy where he is. Encourage gradual movement into deeper water, and use lots of praise and positive reinforcement – if you reward your dog for being in the water, your dog wants to go in the water again.'**7

Now she is across the other room. And the dog in the kitchen waiting for his food. She keeps crying of happiness. Today, she taught her dog to swim in the bathtub. She filled it completely with water, just the right temperature. She grabbed the dog and told him her plan. Slowly, she put his little legs into the water. He seemed to like it. And she let him go a bit deeper. His little legs were moving back and forth through the water. Calm, under control. And after a while, she let him go. His whole body panicked; the water got everywhere. She proceeded with the plan: *"Good! You are doing good! Go on! Swim. Dog."*

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In the next few days, the woman seemed to lose it all. She ran out of energy and filled her body with frustration. As if there were little insects taking over her body: eating little holes from her legs and her hands and eventually her torso and head too. Carefully, she stumbles through the living room where the dog sits in the corner. Something broke. She lowered her body until she lays on the ground. Crawling over the carpet, it gives her warmth. Holding her position, she whistles to the dog *"I love you"*.

When the lady was a little girl, she used to walk with the dog through the neighborhood. She had long blonde hair, a skinny posture, sleazy clothes with marks from every play she had that day. It was winter, and the pond in her neighborhood started to freeze and she was excited because she loved ice skating. But she knew the ice wouldn't hold her yet. So she had to wait. And with her impatience, her naughtiness grew. A few minutes later, she pushed her dog onto the ice. And he slid a few meters further ahead until the ice couldn't hold him anymore... The dog ended up with his torso in the ice cold water, trying to hold his chin up. He couldn't move. The girl started crying and running around in circles. Scared that he would freeze to death.

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It's early in the morning when they wake up from an unusual sound going through the apartment. It has been silent for weeks. The woman lays on the ground, holding her breath. The dog sits straight up in his cage. His brown eyes pointed to the front door. This unusual sound could be a human sound. Or, tiny animals, like... dancing rats running circles fighting for food? The woman doesn't respond. Laying on the carpet brings her comfort.

{Dog}: *“Hey, do you still feel me?
Are you aware that I am still around?”*

The woman turns her head towards the dog. He is still in his cage. She is still on the ground. And the noise coming from the door is still present.

{Woman}: *“Yes. I can see you.”*

The dog sighs and barks in a soft voice.

He has been in the cage for 6 days.

The woman turns her head towards the door. After 6 days of noise this is the first time she really cares about the sound, coming from the outside world. She hasn't been in the hallway for at least a month.

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The woman gets up. Sitting on her knees, holding her body right up with her hands on the ground. She can feel her heart in her wrists. Slowly, she follows the sound and opens the front door. In the hallway, silence covers her ears. She looks down at her feet: *“The pile of plates! They are still there!”* By opening the door to the hallway, it seemed as if her whole world changed. The silence. The carpet. The plates.

And so it goes, she leaves the door open and follows the hallway:


{Dog}: *“Where are you going?”*

{Woman}: *“Nowhere. Don’t worry. I’ll just be downstairs.”*

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- *1 *The sad, sad story of Laika, Alice George*
- *2 *Why Your Puppy Won't Stop Whining, Erin Ollila*
- *3 *Wendy & Lucy, Kelly Reichardt*
- *4 *I Don't Feel a Connection to My Puppy, Alisa Healy*
- *5 *Research about the dreams of a dog, source: Harvard University*
- *6 *Bond with your dog, Shoshi Parks*
- *7 *Swimming lessons, Rachel Velarde*



There is a room, there is a hallway, there is her mind, there is the other. They dazzle and drown and swallow and look into the deep. She feeds the marmots until one day they disappear. The urge to care for something smaller. Graspable. The search for a dog. 56 days later, the new dog lives in her house. She takes care of him. She only leaves the house at night, when the dog sleeps. Guilt starts growing and follows her around. When she gets back to the house her dog reminds her that she has to stay with him. He keeps barking and running around. The woman doesn't move. She has endless staring games with her new dog, day and night. Trying to figure out what is wrong.