

Things I Should Have Done

- #5

by Cherise Wolas

When I walked into the local police precinct to meet with a detective about the scope of my rights, I was thinking about Rocco, the adored dog of a long-ago life. Detective Mijon said, "Based on these emails, the hatred is clearly defined. The NYPD views too much love or hate as *verboden harassment*. We take neither extreme lightly. We can nab this bastard for aggravated assault. If that's what you want." Arrest and jail time for an ex I barely recalled. The skidding clouds tagged the sun; the wind stuttered in gusts. The New York atmosphere was heightened, freighted, weighted, and raucous, though, perhaps, that was my insides. I could not picture his face. I remembered no husbandly actions. Bed memories had evaporated long before the ancient dissolution. Conjuring him, I saw a storm cloud of hate and rain: a weather system fueled by bastardized jealousy. Detective Mijon said, "A night in jail might ice those fingers spewing keyboard hatred into the great beyond." "Hell," the detective said, "If his finances are fucked, could be two days or more before he is sprung." I listened to Detective Mijon outline my options and thought: X ought to picture Rocco when next he triggered 'send' on another venomous cyber-epistle. We married at thirty and soon bought a dog. The marriage was impetuous; the purchase of Rocco was not. His breed was researched, his personality dissected. Deficient as a show dog, he was bought for a song. He smiled and peed when I entered the front door that, upon a sunnier time, X and I once walked through together. Rocco was large, but imagined himself tiny, cushioned in the palm of my hand. Soon, he kissed my cheeks and licked the tears I shed in the bedroom. We owned him but a few months when a cross-country move was demanded; another fresh start. Released back to his breeder, Rocco was freed for pigeon runs and lilac-scented dirt rolls. Though we willingly

walked into the cell, we left him free from a Manhattan imprisonment. When I walked into the precinct, I remembered that twelve-year-old day when X, on the sly, shipped Rocco to JFK, like cargo; in his twisted way hoping furry love would save us. By then I knew, as I should have known long before, we stood no chance. Later, I learned of the purchase of food, bowls, toys and more, stashed in a closet. Much later, I learned Rocco smelled my scent and stood guard at my side of our frigid bed. In those lifeless rooms we called our home, for a single hour Rocco ate dry food and stretched out on the flimsy blackberry couch, shedding his white hair and a few yellow strands. Rocco's big body presence frightened X into yet another act that was wrong. That night, when we met for drinks and pasta, he was pasty. Suddenly loving, filled with detailed plans for our make-believe future, unnaturally acquiescing to all my suggestions, I knew something was more than merely awry. Another night filled with a fight. At dawn, our past thoroughly excavated, he admitted what he had done: too big to keep in our small place, in the early afternoon he settled Rocco into a palatial home with owners honed to care for a pure-breed who knew how to love. Much, much later, I learned it was another one of his lies. He shipped Rocco three thousand miles for a long walk to Carl Schultz Park. I can imagine Rocco, a grin around his wagging tongue, tethered to a new leash buckled round his neck, a new collar engraved with his name. On the promenade, X tied Rocco to an iron bar with a view of the river. KGB-secretive by nature, his get-away was observed. A man out for a run tracked and trailed him forty blocks. A note, left with the doorman, was addressed to *The Fucking Dog Abandoner*. Sleepless and shaken by the previous night's cascade of X's excuses, about everything, I left to earn my salary; which X sneered at, despite his love of draining the bank for his personal pleasures. The doorman handed over the envelope. Inside, the jogger's note simply stated: *You don't deserve to live*. Remembering all that, as I should have, I said to Detective Mijon, "Just one more email from him, like all these others, and I will happily, at long last, send him to jail."

