

Dead Dog Rising

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Dead Dog Rising

My father has not slept with any sort of confidence in over one and one-half weeks. The dog is dying, see; he's dying in that pacing way. He's thin and gray and moving like he has big plans—the kind that wake him in the night to say, *Let's go! Let's break away!*

His claws have grown and since his pads are wasting, sucked-in, sunken soles, claws tap the floor, they keep the time. *Click clack. Click clack. Click.* That sound there—that back and forth—is what wakes my father and drives him mad. *Click clack*, he says, then *skid*, then sometimes, *thump*—which means the dog has lost it.

My father keeps a baseball bat for just this kind of thing, for if the night should make a sound—*creak, slam, shattering glass*—he'd grab that bat and head downstairs, so angry then, more so than scared. *Get out! Get out of my stone house!*

He gives the dog some Valium. He pushes down on his thin backside. He looks him in the eyes and says, *You know me, Dog. I know you know me.* The dog has made such big, big plans and hasn't got the time. He rises later in the night. *Click clack*, he walks. *Click clack. Click.*

My father, mad with sleep, or lack of it, or simply clouded, grabs the bat in his rough, dry fist. *Creak, shuffle, ominous thump.* He runs downstairs in panic, fury. He is angry at the nighttime sounds. He holds the bat above his head. *Get out! Get out of my stone house!*

The dog is there, on sorry legs, with sorry claws. He looks toward the man, the bat, and says, *You know me, Man. I know you know me.*

