

Dog Park

by kate hill cantrill

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We met an old friend and his old dog. We went off leash on the lush Buffalo grass. He and I—this old friend, I mean—talked mostly of divorce, something we shared between us.

“Is someone in my back yard every night?” I asked.

“I don’t think so,” he said, “but it’s hard to say.”

“The dog, she’s always jumping up and looking out there. It could simply be rats, but still, it frightens me.”

“I have a side alley,” he said, “as you well know. My dog goes bananas on it every night around eight.” He called to his dog then—she had run too far—and as she came back to us, he said, “Sometimes seven o’clock in the winter.”

Our dogs are of different ages and one tired before the other.

“Let’s get them some water,” my old friend said, “and avoid these children on the way.”

I agreed. We re-leashed them and veered away from the kids. One was having a tantrum.

“Dogs don’t like tantrums,” he said. “It unnerves them.”

I nodded, but thought he spoke mostly of himself. Men don’t like tantrums, I thought. Something is happening in the world.

“When you lived here,” he said, “when you were married—when we were both married—I thought you were so beautiful.”

“I’m still beautiful,” I said. I pressed the metal button so the dog could drink from the dog-height water fountain.

“Ma’am,” my old friend said in falsetto. “That’s not for dogs. That’s for very, very, very tiny people.” He placed his hand on my back and breathed out a laugh. “More beautiful,” he said. “You have nostalgia on your side now.”

We embraced and then we parted, both with our leashed dogs. After a run in the park, mine tends to curl herself like a donut and fall into a deep sleep. Sometimes when I look at her, I feel this sleep will last a lifetime, but then, at some point, I trust she will wake.

