

## **"The Revenant"**

By Billy Collins

I am the dog you put to sleep,  
as you like to call the needle of oblivion,  
come back to tell you this simple thing:  
I never liked you--not one bit.

When I licked your face,  
I thought of biting off your nose.  
When I watched you toweling yourself dry,  
I wanted to leap and unman you with a snap.

I resented the way you moved,  
your lack of animal grace,  
the way you would sit in a chair to eat,  
a napkin on your lap, knife in your hand.

I would have run away,  
but I was too weak, a trick you taught me  
while I was learning to sit and heel,  
and--greatest of insults--shake hands without a hand.

I admit the sight of the leash  
would excite me  
but only because it meant I was about  
to smell things you had never touched.

You do not want to believe this,  
but I have no reason to lie.  
I hated the car, the rubber toys,  
disliked your friends and, worse, your relatives.

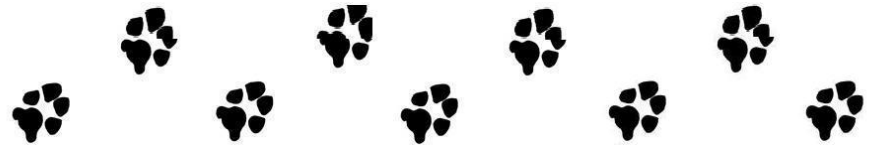
The jingling of my tags drove me mad.  
You always scratched me in the wrong place.  
All I ever wanted from you  
was food and fresh water in my metal bowls.

While you slept, I watched you breathe  
as the moon rose in the sky.

It took all of my strength  
not to raise my head and howl.

Now I am free of the collar,  
the yellow raincoat, monogrammed sweater,  
the absurdity of your lawn,  
and that is all you need to know about this place

except what you already supposed  
and are glad it did not happen sooner--  
that everyone here can read and write,  
the dogs in poetry, the cats and the others in prose.



## **"A Dog, on His Master"**

by Billy Collins.

As young as I look,  
I am growing older faster than he,  
seven to one  
is the ratio they tend to say.

Whatever the number,  
I will pass him one day  
and take the lead  
the way I do on our walks in the woods.

And if this ever manages  
to cross his mind,  
it would be the sweetest  
shadow I have ever cast on snow or grass.