

## **The Vet is coming at two**

My Dog is dying  
Under the crepe myrtle  
In full blossom & drifting  
Down over him & me &  
My wife & the Vet is coming  
At two, he's 14 & had the full  
Dog experience, me rescuing him from  
A rancher who got him as a stray  
Into his ranch & announced he  
Had too many dogs, & his wife  
Knowing he would shoot him &  
I worked with her & so she asked 12 years ago,  
"Would you like a nice dog?"  
& I saw him and said, "Hi buddy,"  
& he sat down right beside me & took  
A pet & he's been my Buddy ever since  
For me & my son & my wife, he's  
Chased cows on my rancher buddy's 7,000-acre ranch  
With Cow-dog English Shepherds in Eastern Oregon,  
& had three years of running with Walker Hounds  
On Black bear chases in Alaska, with my hunting buddy  
Biologist & once treed, we then took pictures  
& petted up the dogs, we let all the bears go  
Once he treed a bear on his own,  
but he would come back to the truck  
If the Walker hounds had a five-mile chase  
He in his Airedale/Rottweiler  
compact 90 lb. frame defended our yard  
From a marauding German shepherd,  
& after the stitch up  
I had him neutered, & he was still hard on cats but  
He learned to live with the one we had,  
Early on I saw that he would point cats

Paw up and tail straight like a bird dog &  
Well, I have had to pay a number of vet bills  
to stitch up felines  
& just two weeks ago feeble as he is  
One wandered into his backyard  
& he tried for one last biting of the cat,  
tipping over the lawn chairs,  
Table & umbrella, & barbecue,  
He always had the seeming happy dog smile  
Even now that he cannot move his hind legs  
& he quivers in pain  
& the Vet is coming at two, & my dear wife  
Has been weeping for three days &  
The crepe myrtle blossoms are falling on him  
& the Vet is coming at two.

## The Red Gate

That last time I was to the farm  
where running through creeks, chasing  
small birds and my imagination, I  
had grown up (in stature at least)  
there was a red gate my Grandfather had built

Much of the paint had blistered and peeled  
as its weight had pulled the corner post  
forward toward the earth that it also  
had leaned for, still functional but barely so

Fashioned with boards and bolt that  
had gone through hand augured holes by  
brace and bit—I still remember  
that tools' shininess from years of use

The gate separated the farm from  
the adjacent well-to do horse ranch  
where fine Arabians pawed at the  
sawdust in tight functional stalls

The north had been a barn that had  
burned several winters back  
all the animals had gotten out and though  
the gate was only five feet away it stood,  
a bit charred but still latched to the fence

It had swung open mostly for bartered loads  
of hay and occasionally for myself, to get closer  
to a fox or deer in the next field and sometimes  
to deliver Christmas cakes to affluent neighbors

The farm changed hands to distant relations  
by marriage, who after a funeral came offering  
condolences and money — I stood there looking  
at its form as the content of memories, of ghosts  
of the distance of wealth, of long-ago laughter  
of the presence of sorrow, that screeched  
like a rusty hinge

## **If I look out the window**

blonde, sunglasses  
dark suited miniskirt  
large belt  
w/tight beige pants  
could be a model.  
standing at an outside table  
of this coffee house  
if I look out the window  
from drinking my joe  
I cannot see anything else but her  
talking through her cell phone device  
clipped in her ear, just barely perceptible  
adamant, using both hands  
for expression, articulate  
it seems, making points,  
striding around a little round table  
& between chairs  
as if a stage  
& this was performance, &  
this is all normal now...  
less than twenty years ago  
this would have been observed  
as psychotic behavior,  
talking to someone who is  
obviously not there & not holding a phone,  
or, rehearsing a play  
my friends. some of them  
think the same of me  
when I pray.