

1971

# Like a Dog

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## LIKE A DOG

A man looking down at his feet, a stranger  
with a few pale hairs tangled across the top of his bald head,  
someone who doesn't know who he is,  
with his bird collection and his health magazines,  
snapshots of cousins from Indiana, a prescription  
for nose medicine, light bills,  
walks down into the basements  
of the population in his sleep.

The steel discs  
of the meters turn. He lists the numbers.  
Brown prongs on the trees like the useless hands of the people of my city.  
I want to run out, I don't want  
to see him from my window or know anything about him,  
staring at his feet.

“Like a dog!”  
like K. screaming it as two men cheek to cheek push  
the blade in,  
God, you told us this agony meant we'd see you, you said  
you were unnecessary like our gills.  
Crossing the street on his job, this  
unrecognized holy fool  
cares, doesn't he?

Dog shit whitens the pavement,  
the first ice wrinkles in the gutters, yellowish  
snow. What this means to the families that eat  
very very little and feel very very cold  
and stroke their little animals is “As  
silver tried in a furnace of the earth,  
purified seven times.”