3 A.M.: Put Pedro to Sleep

Dana Roeser
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I know exactly what death looks like

downy hills pale green
tufts of cottonwood trees
ribbon of road, ribbon of river.

The needle, long and shiny. . . .

Her breath rises and I feel for it.
She’s small.

During the apneas
the little pauses

she might drift as on a hang glider

over that landscape.

I almost pushed him down

the cliff

on Canyon Road
on his last day today

I thought about it

Pedro, companion

of my loneliness

my solitary glides, at night,
over those hills.
Why do they call it

putting to sleep?

At night
we turn ourselves over to God.

In the spring on the first warm hot days
that force the buds open

force purple-scented lilac from dun-leaved bushes
people want
to feel the sun and air again.

They take off their shirts
then,
their heads

with a gun, with. . .

My baby and I keep our shirts on,

stay on this side.

Pedro scrabbles up the edge
across the stones
    in rapid water.

Pedro, ball of will
    and bites,
wagging his white-tipped tail
    when he comes to me.

He’ll be put to sleep.

    At first, his rest will be very dark;
then, wisps of dawn
    will fill the house;
he’ll scratch to be let out

his black and brown tank-shaped body

    will trot down the sidewalk
his toenails will click

    his collar will jingle
an hour later

    he’ll return from Smith’s
as he does
    every morning

from scrounging the dumpster
with a whole roast chicken

a dozen spareribs raw or cooked

a freshly baked loaf of bread
still in its cellophane. . . .