

J E H A N N E D U B R O W

Argos

Because my husband is at war, I name
our puppy for the dog who recognized
Odysseus, knew him despite disguise,
the king dressed as a beggar but still the same

familiar scent of iron on his skin,
that same swagger beneath the cloak of rags,
that sinewed voice. Argos, a fleabag,
a sack of mange, nothing but skeleton,

not even strength enough to lick a paw.
And yet he pricked his ears, tried rising
from the dirt to see his master's eyes
again, then sank, a shadow in the straw.

What kind of instinct is such loyalty?
Bred in the bone, certain as the sound
of waves. No wonder that the wolfhound
barked at the beach for twenty years, the sea

remaining empty, a tarnished piece of steel.
No wonder that he learned to sight each ship
along the sleek horizon, yipping
at vessels that docked, nipping the heels

of every man in Ithaca. He must
have ached, as though from an old wound, to wait
those twenty years beside the palace gates.
Each night he watched the sky fade into rust.

Like a thirst so deep it hollowed out the throat,
like a craving for salt air—he must have known
that it's a body's faithfulness alone,
which made him keep his vigil for the boat.

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