

# Perched

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**M**Y DOG DIED ON SUNDAY. His name was Warrior. He was a terrier with short, grayish, dark-colored fur. He was a gift in tradition of one of the nationally practiced annual festivities. Probably Christmas. The dog was more than likely from an aunt or uncle. It is imaginable that they decided to no longer want him, and acted as though a pet was something that we desired to obtain (as if three children and each other were not enough for my parents to worry about). But despite the fact that I'm not sure where or why we received him, in addition to the fact that he was not something I had ever really deeply hoped to receive, he was still cared for and loved. Warrior was a part of our family.

On that dreary Sunday evening that matched our dog's coat and hinted rain, my father let Warrior into our backyard to use the bathroom. The air was already wet, and my dad said that he noticed a large owl perched on the fence. When the time-out induced commercial break ended, my father rushed back into the house to check the score. When he looked into the back yard, Warrior was bobbing up and down in the chlorinated water of our green-tinted, filthy swimming pool. The veterinary autopsy could not give us an immediate answer to the cause of his death. He may have drowned; the owl may have grabbed him. All I got from my dad was a message. I didn't return his call because I'm already tired of thinking about it.

It was now Wednesday (a few days after the Warrior incident). I woke up to the rhythmic beep-beeping of my alarm clock. I had slapped the snooze button, but the image of a red 9:46 had burned itself onto the insides of my eyelids, and sunlight spilled from the gaps between the blinds. These distractions led me to somehow instinctually hover to the bathroom. I looked at my puffy-eyed, unshaven face, and the clumps of hair matted on the top of my head. The appalling reflection brought me to the conclusion that even though a shower would probably be a good idea; stealing my roommate's deodorant and wearing a hat seemed like a much better one. With minimalist hygiene, less work was required, and that allowed for more time to move slowly. I brushed my teeth, rinsed my bleeding gums, and gave my manhood area a quick scratch or two. Morning masculinity at it's finest. Then I found my way back to my room.

I wanted music. I looked for a record from the top of my bedside shelf to play... I decided it was an *Electric Warrior* morning. Not too hot, not terribly cold yet. The sun wasn't all the way over head. It was still very much morning. T Rex could wake me up, but not obnoxiously. To the tune of "Mambo Sun," I danced to a pile of suspected clean clothes. Upon smelling them, I figured that they would work well. If any stench existed, my roommate's deodorant (that was scented to be "mountain fresh") would more than likely overwhelm it. Thank god someone in the house had some money.

*"I got stars in my beard... and I feel real weird... for yooooouuu you oh yooooou you..."*

9:53. I walked out of my front door and glanced at the piece of shit that I tried to pretend was not my automobile. I felt like the neglecting parent of the deformed. It sat lifeless for almost a month now. Tree sap and dirt had claimed it their own, so I ignored the brown, sticky, used-to-be-white car and relied on my feet to get me to where I needed to go. The only difference from now and when I could drive from place to place is that my newly rendered useless vehicle's state had hindered me from visiting my parents on the other side of town. Neither they, nor I have complained yet.

I walked about three blocks down the street and remembered that I had left the record playing. Hopefully no one will complain. It will click to a stop when side A is done anyways.

It was 10:04 and I approached the door to my place of minimum wage, part-time employment. It was my day off, but I wanted to pick up a paycheck from the week prior. My boss was busy, so our conversation barely made it through the “hello” phase. I noticed the hat on his head, two puffy eyes and week old beard. I also smelled his deodorant. I guess we were having similar days. Well, with exception to the fact that he doesn’t like to listen to T Rex. I turned and began my stroll towards the door.

On my way outside, my boss turned to me and said, “Oh, I heard about your dog... that sucks, man.”

“Yeah.”

I didn’t care to think about it anymore.

With my check in hand, I walked diagonally across the busy intersection to the bank where I placed money into my account. Well, not so often. I usually just cashed my checks.

“Hello sir, how are you doing today?” She was probably in her early thirties, and spoke with a slight southern accent. I had never seen her there before, so it is safe to assume that she must be new. I never looked at her nametag. She looked like a Bonnie.

“Not too bad. I just need to cash this.”

“May I see your I.D. and get your account number?”

I handed her my driver’s license. She looked at the check, then my plastic identification card, and began punching numbers into the computer as I recited my designated assortment of numbers and zeros. Her customer-friendly smile ceased, as her brow rose.

“Sir, you have an overdraft fee of three hundred and twenty two dollars and nineteen cents.”

“Goddamnit,” I mumbled to myself. “Okay, keep the check.”

What a lovely, hungry week it would be.

I left the bank and walked three blocks towards the gas station. I took what change sat in the “give a penny/leave a penny” tray. One

dollar and twenty cents. After I walked outside, I sat on a bench and called my girlfriend, Joan. We had been dating for a few months now. She was a relief to my seemingly endless supply of shitty past relationships, and for once nothing felt one-sided. Life was good. Or better.

“Hey lady,” she said the second she picked up her phone.

A seemingly degrading stab at maleness was actually a term of endearment that began to sound like music at that point.

I was a little startled by the sudden response that broke through mid-dial tone. “Hey... are you downtown yet?”

“Almost. Give me ten minutes. I’m on the interstate.”

She must have left a little late. Or maybe I finished early. Joan was still living at home with her parents. Well, sort of. Her bedroom was over the top of the garage, which was detached from the house. It was similar to having a one-bedroom apartment... only an apartment that was next door to her parents, who keep a careful eye out the window where her father drinks at the kitchen table to catch the hours that I leave. It’s frightening, really.

Ten minutes was probably an overstatement. It was 10:42. Maybe she left on time...or I finished on time. She was arriving to the park bench where I was sitting in what was probably closer to five minutes. I was grateful for her early arrival, because I had an eleven o’clock dentist appointment.

Since the beginning of high school, I hated going to the dentist. Not just because of the obvious distaste for uneasiness brought by drills, needles and hooks being shoved into my mouth, but for the “catching up” that my dentist liked to play.

His son and I were good friends throughout all of elementary school, part of middle school, but then for some reason he decided to start sucking horribly at life. We stopped speaking to each other in any form other than insults and obscenities. I guess his parents also watched him plummet to the depths of failing to exist in an acceptable manner, and clutched onto the glimpse of hope that they saw within his childhood friends.

“Do you remember when you guys would watch Ghostbusters and jump on the bed?”

Thankfully it was a “yes” or “no” question, because he had numbed both my tongue and the left side of my face. I nodded.

“So, what are you majoring in again?”

“Schmadio archests”

His response would become a simple humming noise whenever he was distracted. I found it to be un-amusing when he would pretend to show interest in the gibberish that was spilling alongside of the sandy toothpaste drool. “So I heard about your dog. Do you think it was the owl?”

I hated him.

He looked for great detail in unintelligible responses. He also showed great interest in everything I was attempting to say. And that (as well as the obvious distaste for needles, drills and hooks slamming into my teeth and gums) were the reasons that I despised him and his occupation.

After suffering through the reclined tooth agony, Joan picked me up from the dentist. I sat in silence through most of the car ride. I would have been yelling appalling remarks and shaking my fists towards the dentists with their war prisoner torture devices. But due to the circumstances, I could not get out much more than a monosyllabic grunt or two. I was on my way to lunch... her treat.

12:28. I thought I had hummus for lunch, but it felt more like my lip and cheek. After rinsing out what appeared to be blood and pieces of my mouth, I thanked Joan for lunch and I was dropped off at my place of dwelling. I walked past the filthy white automobile with my eyes set on the front of my house, ignoring its presence. I quickly got to my door.

The next few hours of the day were dedicated to watching silver streamers leave my lips. I sat on my front porch and smoked through the last of my pack of cigarettes. Marlboro Menthol Lights. It seems like everyone hates menthols, so I forced myself to enjoy them. That way people would stop bumming cigarettes off of me. As my pack

emptied itself, I slammed the last tiny torch into the side of the ashtray. It was now 4:03.

Ramen for dinner again. 5:14.

I was a traveler. I was a caregiver. I was a hermit. I was a king. I outlived everyone. I died alone. Heaven was beautiful.

After the nap, I began walking across downtown. The night was engulfing the city, sending us into a frenzy of headlights dashing along the sidelines of the millions of rows of street lamps. I must have walked four or five miles. Winter was nearing, and my breath was visible for the first time this year. The buildings seemed larger at night because their shadows had disappeared. As I approached the stairwell leading into the underground bar, I looked at my wrist. It was 9:02.

I entered the bar with a dollar and twenty cents in my back pocket. I saw friends in a corner booth, so I sat down beside them. We talked about our days, our weeks, and our years...

"I heard about your dog. Have you found out whether or not it was the owl?"

Goddamn.

I told them I did not want to talk about it. Knowing that the subject must be a sore topic, several drinks were purchased for me. A rum and coke. A bourbon and coke. Two Pabst Blue Ribbons. A shot of tequila. I will continue to not speak, thus you will continue to assume I'm angry, and my one dollar and twenty cents will go much further than I could have imagined. My old friends in the corner booth must worry about me. Then someone bummed me a cigarette. Shortly after, someone also called me a cab. 11:28 sits in green lines on the radio.

We buried Warrior in my mother and father's back yard. He now lies in the dirt beside the holly bush where he pissed and shat. I wasn't as sad as I had assumed I would be. We just dug a hole, put his body in there, and covered it up. The vet told us that it was probably the owl's fault. I guess I will have a response next time the question is asked. I went to the end of my parent's driveway and waited. Joan picked me up and we went back to my house. We were both a little hungry, so we ordered some delivery food.