

*“Poncho and the things of life”*

I opened the door to the service porch and D was sitting on the closed top of the washing machine, her legs stretched out before her, her feet resting on the open the ironing board. She didn't look at me as I looked at her. She stared ahead as though sighting along an invisible string from her nose to her boot tip. She wasn't moving, she wasn't even blinking. She was just being beautiful and absorbed.

“What's up?”

“I'm thinking about the things of life.”

“How's it going?”

“About how you'd expect.”

She still wasn't blinking or moving so I left her to her thinking and closed the door and walked back through the living room and past Poncho, the bulldog she had brought with her from another relationship, and Poncho always eyed me when I went by. Nothing major, just lifting an eye without lifting his head, eyebrow cocked, as though asking, You making any headway about how things are? And I always just shrugged. “Don't ask me, I'm just a guest here myself.”

Poncho flicked his eyes away, as though if I couldn't figure things out, what chance was there for a lowly mammal a couple of levels down on the pecking order? He sighed with all the force of exhausted bellows. Poncho settled further into the rug than he had before, resigned to waiting it out.

I wanted to go back to the service porch and stare at D again, just sitting there, her mind wrestling with obscure muscles in her brain. She was beautiful and I just liked looking. It calmed me. Or it gave me something soothing to do. Her face was like a purpose in life for my eyes. But when I did that too much she would ask, “There a problem?”

I wanted to say, “No, your face solves things,” but I wasn't sure how she would take this, or whether it was maybe something nice she would like to hear, something that sounded like the truth.

I carried on walking passed Poncho and into the bedroom, which was a mess. The bed looked like a fight had taken place recently. D 's and my clothes were islands of color on the rug, from door to bed to chest of drawers. I stepped around them to get to the bed and lay on it. I stared up at the ceiling and thought I'd consider the things of life, too, like D., like Poncho.

Except both of them were better at this stuff than me. I blinked too much. And thought about beauty. I could sigh like Poncho, but that was about as deep as it went. So waited for D to finish in the service porch and come find me on the bed, ready to make another new mess.