

## THREE DOGS IN THE AFTERLIFE

Luisa Perkins

*that same sociality which exists among us here will exist among us there*

✦ waits while ● gets her bearings. It always takes a little while, he says.  
● lifts her spirit nose, trying and failing to scan the air. I can't smell, she says.

No, ✦ agrees. Smelling means taking in bits and letting them give you messages. We don't have that here.

● looks around. This is probably still her street, but she's never trusted only in her eyes before.

Is my person here?

She is. You will see her soon.

But how will I know her if I can't smell?

You have a sense beyond smell—you always did.

● cocks her head, confused.

Much of what you think of as smell is actually ◆◆. With it, you sense energy and intention. That's how we're talking now, do you understand?

● yawns the way she always does when she has deep thinking to do. I suppose, she says.

And spirit eyes see light, as I'm sure you recognize, ✦ adds.

● looks up and down the street. It's flat and faded without the voluptuous dimension of odors, aromas, fragrances—like the screen her person watched in the evening sometimes. (● never understood the appeal.)

I guess so, she says doubtfully.

She looks at ✦ more closely, fighting the impulse to sniff. Where's your person?

The Master is my person. He asked me to greet you. I greet all the new ones. We find it helps ease the disorientation.

A bit of grey flashes past ● and up a tree trunk. ● puts up her spirit ears. Was that a . . .

Squirrel, yes. They're usually up for a good chase, but always ask first. It's one of the rules.

I'm supposed to ask a squirrel if I can chase it?

Yes. We're not enemies here. There is no prey, only the pack. Squirrels, persons, even cats—

● yawns again, unable to believe what ✦ has just said. Cats. You've got to be kidding. They're pure evil.

Cats are the Master's creations, like you and me, ✦ says firmly. They're part of the pack. So chasing is okay, as long as you remember it's a game.



Later, ● recognizes ♠. Before . . . all this . . . he ran down her street most days at dawn and dusk. ● barked a greeting every time he passed, almost envying ♠'s freedom—until her person gave ● a tasty and scratched behind her ears. Persons were the best. ♠ had no person, ate out of tipped trash cans, and slept in forgotten corners. But he trailed scents of places ● had never been, and ● picked up those whispers and rumors on walks with her person. Remembering them now, she bites back a whine.

I can see that I will look on the absence of my body's nose as a bondage, she says.



✦ agrees that ● can go around with him until her person is ready. They walk all through the neighborhood, then beyond and into the city, and ●'s spirit paws never ache with fatigue. That's one nice change. It almost makes up for the lack of smell.

It's not long now until you'll have it back. The Master won't tell any persons when, but He told me.

● cocks her head, hoping for more. But, no.

I can't tell you yet. But it's soon.

I'll see my person first, though.

✦ assured ● earlier, but she needs to hear it again.

Yes.

✦ is patient, which tells ● good things about ✦'s Master. As the person, so the dog, was what ●'s mother said when ● was a pup.

♠ runs by again—with two cats and a big animal ● doesn't recognize. ● still finds it odd, the different animals and the persons all going around together. One pack, she reminds herself. A question occurs to her.

♠ didn't have a person before. Will it always be so?

The Master saves special persons for wild dogs like ♠. He has been promised a person who had no dog before.

● knew there were such people, felt bad for them when she met them. It is good this Master has a plan.

I'd like to meet your Master.

And so you shall. In fact, it's time. Your person will be there, too.

They cross a bridge and come into a vast park, one ● has never seen.

● feels a tingle of ♠♠ in her spirit nose, and all the colors of the plants and flowers and sky flare brighter for just a moment. The pulse comes again, stronger, and ● puts up her spirit ears.

♠♠, she says, increasing her pace. It's my person.

Indeed, says ✦.

They run, never tiring, and the pulses flare more often and more brightly until they round a corner and everything is round and real and almost smelly in its varied beauty.

And then, walking toward them on a path, two persons.

● barks like crazy. She speeds to her person's side and circles around and through her person's spirit legs, wagging her spirit tail frantically.

●'s person kneels and places her spirit hand on ●'s spirit head, and it's almost as good as a tasty. ● is about to lick her person's spirit face, but then comes a Voice.

“●.”

● looks up. And knows.

Master, she whispers. Looking into his eyes, ● remembers everything from before—and from before that. She rolls onto her spirit back humbly.

The Master kneels by ●'s person's side and rubs ●'s spirit belly with His hand.

“●,” the Master repeats. “IT IS WELL.”

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