

Night's Animal

I still listen for the wolves
at night. Dad insisted
they were only wild dogs,
but I knew better;
they bared storybook teeth
and pink mouths;
they sulked from stone
pedestals down into the pastures;
they crawled on rough bellies,
matting down the grass.
Twisting in bed, I'd chew tiny
scraps of flesh from my fingers.
Sleep licked at my eyelids.

I was asleep the night
a friend's father took his gun
out into the pasture
and startled away the wolves.
The gun's hammer struck
a deafening crack; the quiet
song of his fallen body
slumped over in the grass.
The wolves scattered
and vanished in the darkness.
I never found what became
of my friend. I never
saw him again.