

# Teaching an Old Dog

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Every afternoon my dog  
takes me for a walk.

We begin by getting  
very excited

running circles of gratitude in the hallway  
for the mere idea of walking.

Once outside, she makes me practice  
my lessons.

Run as fast as you can  
for no reason.

Chase things you have  
no hope of catching.

Forego straight lines.

Step in every puddle.

Listen.

Here, she says, here  
a deer has passed.

She is patient with me,  
points with her snout

urges me to get on my knees  
and smell for myself

but I don't, of course,  
because I am an old dog

and there's a limit  
to what I can learn.

Sometimes she runs ahead  
then stops in the middle of the road  
and turns to watch me.

This is a test.

You're composing poetry  
in your head, she'll say.

You're rehearsing conversations  
that will never take place.

And I catch myself  
and remember the best trick  
she's taught me yet—

to walk  
as if every part of me  
was listening to God.