

# THE BOYS OF OREGON

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*by Suzanne Burns O’Ryan*

Your dog will die on a day no one will notice  
with their double-shot lattes  
and their worries about money, and getting fat  
and whether that young mom with the glittery thong  
really left her daughter in the backseat and forgot to come back.  
Good dogs even die in Oregon  
where there are too many fields to track,  
most smelling the way lavender wishes it smelled,  
dirty and miraculous,  
like a couple entwined in the kind of sex  
that makes Jesus seem like more than a fairytale  
until they exhale, and get on with it.  
Sometimes when you are close I catch my breath.  
You give your dog pink medicine when he is sick.  
This means you would give me anything I asked.  
Postcards and candy bars. Magic tricks. Big Macs.  
You almost died on a day no one noticed.  
Hazelnuts grow around here. We are known for that.  
People with too much money buy them  
chocolate dipped and hike with handfuls  
through the Portland park where you tried  
to oversleep your way to the busted alarm beneath.  
But it went off, and you came back.  
Death meets the boys of Oregon  
like a doctor with that first hearty slap.  
There are horses and legs and hearts to be broken.  
There are cotton candy fairs and suicide attempts  
and your dog loping towards you  
never guessing you almost left us  
the way spring taunts winter with all that green.  
The way your dog spells love when you rub his chest.  
The way the west unfolds its golden rolls each morning,  
and how all this untidy wildness will never really let you rest.