**Laika**

Moscow street-mutt, unloved

stray. Eleven pounds of bone,

of pelt, of tail. Who can weigh

the heart of dog? What dials

or instruments may measure

loyalty; the desire, hard-wired,

to obey? Dogs have no gods,

know only to worship the hand

that feeds. There is no canine

word for *pray*. Brave little

cosmonaut, faithful to a fault;

caught and collared, Earth no

more than a distant ball with

which you cannot play. How

the words that sent you on

your way crackle through

the ragged dishes of your ears,

a comet’s tail of breaking

syllables that even now leave

their trail: *Laika, in. Laika, lay.*

*Good girl, Laika. Wait. Stay.*

**Note**

Laika: 1957 Soviet space dog, one of the first [animals in space](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Animals_in_space) and the first to [orbit](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Orbit) Earth, she died from [overheating](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hyperthermia). Laika’s craft, *Sputnik 2*, and her remains, disintegrated on re-entering Earth’s atmosphere.