

## Aurelia

Aurelia, a seven-year-old female Chihuahua mutt, ran away from the parking lot of “Im Dol” at the corner of Podbielskiallee on Thursday, July 7, at around 1:00 p.m. during a visit to Berlin. Identifying features: brown and white collie markings, operating scar on the left side of the tummy, is very afraid of strangers and other dogs, wiggled out of her harness in order to escape from a large dog. Her home is in the country, approx. 75 miles away from Berlin. We’re grateful for any information about Aurelia.  
Reward: 500 euros.

The world ended where young men were setting off firecrackers at the fence.

The dog ran—jumping to the side several times in the process, turning her head—back to the little woods at the parking lot, out of which the horrors of the coldness rustling in the parched grass had frightened her away.

The shadows seemed less of an enemy to her now.

Behind the little woods came a wide, four-lane road. After that, the night began.

Aurelia, a big name for a little dog, a jittery thing with a rapidly palpating heart, always filled with fear.

All around, the gardens were dark and wet like the year that was coming to an end; no snow anymore.

The little dog had certainly been run over long ago; not a single one of the paper snippets containing the phone numbers, cell phone and landline, had been torn off; was lying on the roadside where one drove away from the city, squashed, like the many cats and hedgehogs, crows and foxes.

The big dogs would become a familiar, a forgotten fear to Aurelia, alone in the snarling twilight, if she was still living.

She had a scar on her stomach, perhaps she had had an operation on her uterus or she was already pretty old, 500 euros for a sick, mentally-disturbed little dog; it was probably long dead.

Fear of what is strange, to have no fear of strangeness, with a lot of brains, with a superior intellect, or dumb but with a strong, beautiful body, simply to walk straight, curious and unsuspecting, trustingly—like a pirate captain, nothing can take me by surprise.

Is afraid of strange people, giants and German shepherds, screeching, booming animals rushing by, of headlights blinding and drilling into her brain.

The courageous faced deceit helplessly, had forgotten the fluttering heart, the quivering eyelids.

Courageous people who actually “walk tall through life.”

Walking tall – the desire to stride like a dancer, a queen. (Such words like dancer, queen!)

Seeing into the distance.

To see far, not on the roadside, reading the note pinned on the tree by the road.

Not to whimper when seeing a bigger dog, Aurelia, not in the darkness.

But that such fearless ones existed was perhaps an illusion, a myth held dear to people, a mirage kept deep within everyone, gingerly.

Across the way, a monster with its maw wide open, whose teeth flash as a car drives by, hundreds of monsters rolling like balls, with throbbing, soft breath—more and more of them.

Night wasn't the worst thing, though, sometimes it had soft fur, warm hands. Sleep and juggler's dreams.

The crashing noise blew up the world, rubble rained down, tatters of trees and tar from the street.

Only the human beings remained standing, they laughed, turning in a circle, slapping one another on the shoulder.

The dog cowered into the embankment, licked the scar on her stomach to put things aright.

Despite the pain the noise wreaked upon her and her habitual fear, she was curious, which she naturally didn't know.

To see what the dancing and stomping meant, whether the flying into fragments and shooting off of sparks stated that the world was ending, that she herself was going to the dogs: despite everything, curious.

Her muscles balled up owing to her shivering.

But Aurelia ran farther—into the black and, in turn, into the light.

The moldiness was at least familiar, acorns, chestnuts, moss and tiny snails and everything that drilled into the earth.

Creatures that bit into the skin.

The brown and green smelled acridly of urine.

In the rotting leaves that covered the earth were prints, broad boot steps and sandy spots churned up by restless paws.

She zipped the zipper of her jacket up to her throat and ascended the embankment, leaving the narrow footpath.

Her eyes accustomed themselves to the feeble light.

Beforehand the childish noise had frightened her; but then a fog lulled the shots and the shouts, the laughter of the young people. Behind the fog, their shadows moved.

The dampness accumulated in her hood.

It had grown quieter; voices could be heard only from afar, and it even seemed to be warmer, behind the trunks here.

The dog mistook the surroundings for the garden in which she usually poked around, where she was at home, and behaved like in the garden, forgetting for a happy space of time the present horrors.

Nuts and beechnuts, berries, gleaming black ones, covered the ground between the shadows of the branches.

There was much that fought back in the woods, with sharp thorns and stingers, with poison and hardness.

Holes between tree roots, trickily hidden under the leaves, a little trunk whipped back and hit her.

The dog yelped and jumped back and forth.

It found a new path behind the blackberries, a swath in gentler grass.

Only a couple of black incrustated spots at the edge of the woods were left from the snow of last week. The frozen mud had thawed and was frozen again in bizarre shapes. The edges and spikes that wheels and boots had left were like sharp claws; Aurelia yelped, attempted to defend herself with bowed head. Then she jumped in a spot of crusted snow, took painful steps in order to free herself, felt the roughness and coldness against her stomach, her paws. Finally, she saved herself again by going to the moldy leaves.

Up farther, under beech tree, a movement; she listened; her head was filled with it—loud moaning and crying, although it was silent in the twilight surroundings.

She heard harried breathing, gasping for breath, howling.

The noise of the street, the whooshing by of engines, snarling, braking, starting up; despite that, she can differentiate cries, voices, the tiny yelp of the dog.

It couldn't be far away.

The wind had grown quiet again.

She inhaled, mouth open, her eyes were tearing.

She had gone farther away from the street. At a narrow clearing, a kind of hollow, in the midst of which water and leaves had accumulated, she saw the dog, which was running in a zigzag line, from time to time raising her head.

It seemed agitated; its fur was wet.

She could see even from the distance how it shivered. She descended sideways cautiously down the slope.

As she heard a noise behind her, she stopped.

There were no shrubs, no high weeds in this place in which a dog could hide.

Aurelia cringed down, hoping she wouldn't be noticed.

She wasn't curious anymore. Fear and cold tore at her.

Move not. Smell nothing more save for death.

A fox stood behind her. She had already seen a few earlier, in the little park near her apartment.

They came into the city, thin and pointy, became sociable.

A low yapping came from the disheveled bundle in the weeds.

The fox looked in that direction, then again at the woman.

Crows dropped down behind the fox from the tree, five or six of them; they stepped over the ground covered with beechnuts, shaking with anger.

Aurelia knew crows and other birds, mighty enemies in the garden at home; they followed tracks, they obstinately grubbed around with their beaks; they were restless.

She didn't see the fox, blind to the unknown.

When it rained in the happy times, she had sat behind the window, warm and dozing behind the windowpanes that were fogged with moisture.

She often didn't move a muscle for a long time, had slept, the murmuring human voices had made a cradle for her.

Sleeping. In the little shadows, which the gnome made in the garden, the heat of the sun, the smell of dust and acrid chamomile.

Smells, not really remembered in the shadow world here: golden water in the grass, the dandelion tasted bitter, dried out excrement, flies.

Concrete and sweat. Things that were.

The fox was then only a movement between the trees. The shadows closed up again.

Looking forward, the darkness was a solid wall; it dissolved into watery fog, puddles of brown; Aurelia dipped her paw into one and lifted it—she was hardly breathing.

She listened carefully. But no voice called; no sounds made by humans whom she was used to.

Playing, scampering about in circles, the feeling of biting into the ball that was thrown.

Confusing images like flies.

The dog looked for a place.

She took a clump of earth in her mouth, which tasted of iron and rain, and dropped it again.

Finding a place. That was how it had always been: Only when she'd found it did she know that the place was the right one.

The search was constant; it preoccupied her life: sniffing and burying; listening to the gathering rumble.

She had learned to bury in the leaves of the garden, there, where it was not really terribly cold, where the wind never came, not even on a night during winter.

The garden was protected by high hedges and a wall.

Thousand suns, which rolled and became more and more.

Red berries. Every morning, it was important to discover again what was known, to sniff at it, to make sure that everything is in place.

To discover that which belongs to you again and calm down the heart that is still palpitating from confused dreams: wall, fir-tree group, main gate.

She imagined how she grew with very breath and inflated. That was O.K. so long as she was alone.

The only risk entailed in that was that she expanded too much and thus became ephemeral like drizzling rain.

She wished she'd find the little dog.

She didn't see the white shadow anymore. Then only a movement in the leaves; perhaps it was the wind.

Ever since she could think, she suspected herself of it: she was deceitful, not open like others, and envious.

She felt how the wetness rose all around her, how she might drown in the rain.

Deeper in the woods, there was a danger that the dog had drowned in the pond—a deep and dark eye, hidden; she remembered the stench that fumed from it in the summer.

Young people drank beer on its banks. Nobody swam there. Children and dogs had perished in it; and a herd of deer, which, afraid, terrified by an incomprehensible threat, swimming across the pond, wanting to get themselves to a safe place, had drowned. Stories from the forestry office, from the police, over and over again. The newspaper reported on the incidents, almost like in a series.

She had often been here when she was young. An ugly place, an ugly memory.

The feeling that she had to find the dog became more urgent.

At the same time, as she always did, she mocked herself for it—desires, affectations often penetrated her and took her breath away.

She focused on the coldness that pierced her, right through; her face froze to a death mask.

Recovering what was lost. For animals, there is no past, nothing irretrievably sunken.