

Jesus Of The Wolves

I had my headphones on so he had to say it twice.

“Is he friendly?”

The man was forty:

Tracksuit, tattoos, trainers split in front.

Yes, I said.

He hunkered down and stroked my dog.

I say “stroked”: he went at it with vigour, to say the least,

Rubbing his ears and under his chin

Like my dog was a lamp and he was summoning a genie from within.

He didn’t stop. My arm began to ache

From holding the lead and my smile

Tautened.

He stroked and tickled and rubbed and stroked

Until the dog, I swear, began to shake,

Vibrating like a vase on a potter’s wheel.

I thought that it was time to intervene,

Say something, move away and jerk the lead.

But then my dog began to change.

He lengthened, grew, got fatter, bigger too.

His fur was coarser, thick from head to tail.

He looked at me with wilder eyes, my dog no more,

Teeth bared not in anger but surprise.

And then he slipped the lead, and ran.

“Sorry about that,” said the man,

“It happens sometimes. I guess I don’t know my own strength.”

A shrug. A smile.

He walked away.

@ David Quantick 2020