**Wake**

On a cold night last winter there was a fire at the house of a man who only days before had beaten his dog to death.

Being a strong man, he was able to rescue all his belongings single-handedly, carrying them out of the burning building and onto the front lawn. As soon as he had finished, a hundred dogs of every shape and size trotted into the flickering light from the surrounding shadows and promptly sat on top of every appliance and piece of furniture as if it were their own. They would not let the man come close and snapped at him viciously when he tried to hit them, but otherwise remained still, staring impassively at the flames.

The fire burned with astonishing intensity, the house collapsed within minutes, and the enraged man stormed away in search of a weapon. As if on cue, the dogs leapt to the ground and circled quietly in the smoky darkness, taking turns to urinate on every rescued object. They howled once, not very loud or long, but with such melancholy that even those who could not hear it turned restlessly in their sleep.

And then they were gone, scattering to the streets and alleys, heads hanging at the sound of their own paws scuffing on the concrete footpaths, ground that had once been wild black earth. They did not look back at the final small fires on the lawn, or the man who returned with a useless crowbar to stand in the ash, alone and weeping. The dogs thought only of home: the smell of warm kennels, of safe laundry baskets and the beds of sleeping humans, the ones who had given them peculiar names.