

Humans on the Beach

This is the twelfth summer
you've brought me here.

After each long journey,
in the span of our first beach walk,
I see your eyes soften,
and smile broaden,

We revel in each other
and the freedom found in
slipping the collar of the city.
There is suddenly *more room*
for chasing sandpipers,
and gazing off,
collapsing
in wet, happy heaps;
lolling like
litter mates ~
baring our teeth with joy.

Avidly I watch the earnest
collection of
the most beautiful shells
on every walk.
Knowing that each time
they will lose
their wet magic
on the kitchen table.

On early trips,
youth drew me
down the beach.
Maniacally chasing
your stubby-toed,
chubby-legged children
and gulls.

The beach assaults
my nose with pleasure.

Sand clings to my wet
black muzzle.
You throw balls,
or fling frisbees
with abandon
and bad aim.
I tumble and
leap for
sport.

In the middle years,
I nuzzled your sandy-bottomed spawn
away from the water's edge;
guardian and
playmate
soaking up
the fur-pulling adoration
of our pack.

Occasionally the zephyr
of puppyhood
whistles up my spine,
Frolic finds me again,
and you laugh to see it return.

In my 12th year,
I am calm
and watchful.
Head held high,
stately.

There is no more need
to herd
our tribe;
legs and conversations have
grown longer.

We are the loved and beloved.

In spite of stiff haunches,
I am a paragon of canine clarity.
Sunbeams light my
scruffy gray cheeks
and steady brown gaze.

The horizon of my departure
looms
in your wistful eyes.
We have grown to be
wise together ~
dog-eared companions.

You are my people.
I will forever be
your dog.

Your memory.

My hope is *never*
to leave your side ~
tethered by devotion.

It is the dearest wish
of every hound...

...and every human on the beach.

For Atticus