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# DIRTY FRANK

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E.M. WELCHER

is the pastor of Grace Baptist Church in Vermillion, South Dakota. He is the author of *Advent: A Thread in the Night*, *Nightscares: Poems from the Depths*, and *Resplendent Bride: Essays on Love and Loss*. Find him on Substack.

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When I was in my 20s, my brother gave me his dog. Professor Frank. Eighty-five pounds of black-and-white stray mutt. Red collar. His tail, a cedar of Lebanon, thumped against walls, shins, the very world itself, and your soul. But his heart weighed 99 pounds. His love reverberated through the plywood of the mobile home I rented, *thump, thump, thump*, like the heart of God pulsing through redemptive history.

We would cruise around the sacred hills and hollows in my black Ford F-250. Then we picked out a house. Frank slept in the mudroom. His tail gave a pulse to our home.

I met a girl. Frank thought she was sure neato keen. We got married. She died.

A man has a way of turning in on himself. All the hues of the day simmer down to nothing much worth watching, so you stare at the wall a bit. Shadows lengthen, but you don't bother turning the light on. The garbage has more bottles in it than you care to admit, and perhaps you catch a glimpse of yourself in your truck window and realize the bags beneath your eyes reveal that the rhetoric of faith seldom pans out into gold. Maybe you turn on a show to ignore. I merely sat and watched reruns in my head, with no love left to give.

The pulse of the house went quiet. Behemoth's tail failed to wag in the mudroom. I went to see the mutt, and

he barely bothered to look up. The dog missed her too. He mourned with a broken heart. Nothing's sadder than a brokenhearted dog.

I lay prostrate on the unswept mudroom floor, like I was at one of those churches where you let everybody know you're about to get serious with the praying. I lay down next to my mutt friend, petted him for a while, and finally said, "I miss her too, boy."

Like a dead man shocked back to the land of the living, I heard the house's pulse resume, *thump, thump, thump*, as Frank's tail returned to life.

Sometimes all we need to start inching away from the darkness is an acknowledgment of the wreckage. "Oh, I see there's parts of you all over the highway, and your heart is nowhere to be found." The wreckage has gone beyond the repair of human hands, but the cognizance goes a long way.

I suppose that's why the prophet Isaiah let us all know that the Christ would be "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief" (53:3, ESV).

The Lord Jesus is a wild man. He sent prophet after prophet to Jerusalem—even showed up himself to gather his people as a hen gathers her chicks beneath her wings. But they would not have it (Matt. 23:37).

He sent me a dog. ✨

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