**Walking the Dog**

 I slouch on the couch, comfortable in my favorite clothes, staring at the news anchor as he drones on about that disaster or this riot. A snow storm is supposed to be moving in tonight, the weatherman preaches. My dog Chloe lays curled up beside my feet, with her head propped on her leg. She’s our pure bred Brittney Spaniel recently adopted and already a special member of the family. As I push myself into the cushions, my feet nudge her a bit too much for her own taste. She then starts the slow process of standing up. She squints her eyes while she stretches out her leg, as if trying to grasp at some imaginary treasure on the floor. With hesitation she pushes herself up with her hind legs first. Walking out of the room as if she had completely forgotten me, she goes to check on her food that is so predictably there. I am amazed at how such an animal can keep to her schedule better than I do mine.

 I then hear the all too familiar directive from my mother in the adjacent room. I have come to expect it, yet it still gets me agitated. I sink even deeper into the warm embrace of the couch, as if hearing nothing. I always delay as much as possible the dreaded task before me. After her third command, I wearily begin to pull myself away from the comfort that has enveloped me. Out the window the flakes form horizontal streaks as the wind blows furiously. As slowly as possible, I stretch out my arms and legs, not wanting to leave the peace of the room.

 I trudge up the stairs to change into something appropriate for the task that lay before me. Now fully awake, I bound down the stairs. Searching for me gloves and hat, and finding none, I unwillingly grab my father’s worn knit cap, only to be stopped by my mother holding mine in her hand while she rolls her eyes. Reluctantly I pull the gloves over my hands, and my hat over my head. I stomp towards the door as Chloe bounds after me. Pulling down the leash and snapping it to her collar, I slowly open the door and step out into the dark cold.

 Just then, the hard driving flakes seem to slow down, and light upon the dust covered world. I take a deep breath of the rich air, revitalizing me. Leaping down the steps, I begin the route that has become routine. With Chloe at the lead, no force but her adventurous spirit pulls me along. Passing her, she takes it as a sign to quicken her own pace. She soon starts into a gallop, pulling me along once again. I then hit full stride, keeping abreast of while running together as if that was all there was to do. We come around the next corner, and see the house in plain view. That quickly? It seems like only a few moments have passed before we begin to slow down. We both reluctantly slacken our pace into a slow trot, and then a flat out walk.

 Panting, exhausted, we climb the stairs with no real drive. Opening the door I begin the arduous task of drying Chloe off. With an annoyed look on my face and an edge to my voice, I call to my mother to bring a towel. Through the door one sails toward me. Holding her tightly by the collar, I ruffle her with the towel until she is sufficiently dry. As soon as my grasp releases, she runs towards the kitchen to see my mother. I pull my hat and gloves off, and put them both in their proper place together. Removing the now wet boots, I bound up the stairs and change into my old clothes. I am soon back on the couch, with Chloe snuggled at my feet, I watch someone new talk about that political fiasco or this outbreak of malaria. With a pleased smile on my face, I push myself as far as possible into the cushions and change the channel.