Author Grace Paley once remarked that she knew she had a story when she had two stories. In today’s poem Bruce Spang, the poet laureate of Portland, tells two stories at once -- one about a dog, and the second about a marriage.

Humane Society

by Bruce Spang

The neighbor’s pup, wanting in, won’t let up. Yelp. Yelp. Yelp. This, the fourth night of its desperation.

Our two cats huddle at the open window pretending to be sympathetic. Downstairs, the cuckoo pleads its shrill three-stress call.

I can remember, shivering in my pajamas, calling out, again and again, Sandy, Sandy, Sandy, drifting into blackness. Leave it alone, My wife would intone. Let it learn.

But it was not the dog I was calling, not then, when my marriage could be counted in the three-word sentences we barked between us. It was my wanting out, there on the porch in the cold, waiting to hear how far my voice could carry across night fields.