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Even if more frightened than hurt, a dog that has been injured will sometimes hide until his desire for a meal and his place near the fire grows stronger than his fear. When we were eighteen, my childhood sweetheart and I ran away together. Or we clung to one another as our families dissolved around us. In either case, I experienced her as if a window in a very hot room had been thrown open and when I looked about I was no longer a child. Within seven years, she was wife to me and mother to our eldest son – another was to come. We were together for almost fifteen years and now have lived apart longer than that. The marriage is something that exists in fits and starts along certain lines of narrative. Some of these tracks are habitual. Others have grown vague or perhaps even vanished. Our time together has become a dream we dream more or less separately. However, I find I have been party to raising two boys. They visit. Know me as father. As with a great deal that has been crucial, having children was not my idea. The point is that after being together for six years, and while we were both still in college, my girlfriend, who had shown almost no inclination towards children, announced one afternoon that she wanted a baby. I wanted to hide.

