

# *Absence Doesn't Soften the Grass*

YVONNE HIGGINS LEACH

Seeing that my dog is old and dying, my neighbor said:

*That's why I never got one. Truth is, they always die before you do.*

And so, I walked Gus over to him, close enough for his furry head to meet his calloused hands. With a wet-nose nudge, Gus looked up in an act of faith and the dead bird inside my neighbor's heart broke open.