

## ALCMAEON AND THE DOG

*Greece, Circa BCE 450*

*The Greek Philosopher Alcmaeon of Croton conducted the first recorded vivisection by removing a dog's eye, severing the optic nerve, and ultimately assisting in the medical understanding of blindness.*

Alcmaeon felt inside the unblinking fog and found an optic nerve, that strong sliver gluing the eye and brain. There he discovered how disease finds its way. How it rises first from the blood, the marrow, or from outside—a body of water, some violent environment. He discovered how hearing orders sound into patterns. He discovered how taste occurs when heat dissolves what we consume through our warm, soft tongues. He found how simple smell is, riding with breath to the brain. He saw how sleep blooms as blood shifts toward the feet. How we wake when the blood rises up again. How sick we get before we cease to grow. He discovered how easily we are disturbed, incapacitated, stopped and how this puts the soul in locomotion. He discovered just how much we need the eye joined to the brain, but even then we cannot join our beginning to our end. Even then we can't keep the soul inside.

Perhaps, with all this knowledge, Alcmaeon turned to the one-eyed dog and said *thank you*. In return, the dog made a gesture as though to say *it's okay, I've forgiven you*. Alcmaeon asked the dog to stay as his pet, and the dog gestured *alright*. In the dog's new life, he or she was revered by all of Croton for their sacrificial role in these discoveries; a national holiday named in the dog's honor. Alcmaeon gave the dog a good name. A unique but not degrading name. Nothing referential to the missing eye.