

April 2021

The Short Leash

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Recommended Citation

Olson, Ted (2021) "The Short Leash," *Yalobusha Review*. Vol. 1 , Article 14.
Available at: <https://egrove.olemiss.edu/yr/vol1/iss1/14>

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The Short Leash

My father fenced the garden
so groundhogs couldn't get
his beets, and he poured beer
in a bowl to drown the slugs;
then, before he went inside,
he told me to tie the dog
under the apple
to scare off the deer:
"And keep the leash short—
that beast will eat
whatever's within reach;
all my good training
for nothing. . ." He left,
and I did what he said,
but the dog tugged;
my fingers already bled
from pulling up some beets,
so I said, "I'll set you free
today." The dog sped away,
and I followed; together
we plunged in the river.
Moments later, I heard the cry
of a rifle. I ran back to find
my father—a buck trapped
inside the fence—panting:
"Here, boy, here!"