There is a dog.

A dog is drifting by.

There is a dog, swimming, following the current of the river.

Perhaps the dog is doing nothing more than being swept down the river, but it looks as though it’s swimming, as though it’s following the current, heading towards the dam where two rivers meet. No, it looks as though it’s being swept down the river. Since the dog cannot speak, no one knows how it ended up drifting in the current, and even if it were able to speak, bark, or cry, the noise would get swallowed up by water, and silently, it would be washed away with the dog. The dog is black and large, but because its soaking wet hair looks as black as black can be and its large body is mostly submerged, its blackness and largeness aren’t very noticeable. The dog is submerged in water, the water is moving, the dog is moving, and so the river is moving. The dog’s name, the dog’s age, the dog’s sex, the dog’s breed, and even the dog’s language are unknown. That dog that is far, right now so far away, even if it had a language, even if it were a dog’s language, there is no truth that can be known about that dog. The dog like dog that is just a dog. The dog that is swimming.

The dog is swimming silently.

All of a sudden shouts ring out from the side of the riverbank where frost has yet to form; it’s the sound of three or four people gathered and shouting towards the dog. Video cameras. Microphones. Reeds. Wind. Summer. And 4 P.M. And a point just past 4 P.M. No one knows why the cameras are there. A small, run-down boat moored across the
river looks as though it’s adrift. Before the dog is carried to the dam, before it is cast away, before the water meets the barrier, the dog must be scooped out. If it were winter right now, if there were a freeze and the cold, harsh days continued until the air froze, until the whole river froze, then the dog could simply slide across the top of the thick ice. No, if it were a dry season instead, if the dry days continued until the sand became dust, until the river dried up, until the bottom of the river creased and cracked like wrinkled lips, then the dog could simply walk across the bottom of the river, on its four legs, without leaving any paw prints behind.

The dog moves on.

The dog is not interested in crossing the river, or it looks that way at least, since it doesn’t resist the current and continues to move straight ahead. On and on it moves, front paws, back paws side by side, paws criss-crossing, on and onward. Someone calls its name loudly, but it seems unreasonable to the dog to call its name in a language not its own, and so it doesn’t respond, doesn’t look back, but fixes its sight straight ahead—no, on a point a little above straight ahead, and keeps swimming, with its head sticking out from the surface of the water at a 30-degree angle. The dog is swimming calmly, but who can know how calm it really is? The people standing on the riverbank begin to walk in the direction the dog is heading. Quickly or slowly. If the dog could walk on water, if it could run on water… While someone shouts again, while someone anxiously calls the dog’s name again, while the dog’s name is on everyone’s lips, the dog acts as though it can’t hear anything, or it pretends not to hear anything, and with the bottom half of its drooping ears submerged in water, the dog moves on and on, westward and westward. The dog that is only a dog will sink before it sinks. It’s a strange phrase, but there is no other suitable expression. When the dog’s blackness and largeness are no longer in anyone’s sight, it will disappear. The dog and the river, the river and the dog.

The dog must cross the river. There are cameras waiting to record the moment it crosses, from that side of the river to this side, and there are people standing safely between the reeds, not entrusting their bodies to the current, who are hoping, no, who had hoped that the dog would cross the river. The reason someone was able to become the dog’s owner was because he or she had given the dog a name, and because of this reason, he or she had told the dog to cross the river, or perhaps had commanded it to cross the
river, and after fastening a metal collar around its neck, had pushed the dog into the water. Perhaps the weight of the collar will cause the dog to sink to the bottom of the river. Therefore the cameras on standby across the river will also have to sink. Therefore the dog’s name and the dog’s language will also sink. Disappearing from the people’s sight, the spot where the dog should have arrived has already disappeared from the dog’s sight. No one knows why the dog does not cross the river, why it does not cut across or sail across, or how it has come to drift with the current of the river. The dog is not crossing the river and the dog is not swimming. The dog is drifting by.

The dog is drifting by.
The dog is.
The dog is gone.

3

The child is lucky.
But before we talk about her good luck, because several more children will be entering the scene, we first need to talk about her name. The child’s name is Mia. It could be Min-a, Mi-na, or Min-ha, or it could be A-mi, Yu-mi, or Yun-mi, but since she thinks of herself as Mia, let’s just call her Mia.

Mia is lucky. One day, she receives a set of 72 German-made watercolour pencils from one of the two men who consider her to be their daughter. Mia has two fathers. One is not yet aware of the other’s existence, or pretends not to know, and the other is aware of the one’s existence, but chooses to turn a blind eye for some unclear reason. When someone learns of a truth that no one knows, all the surrounding relationships will drastically change. Nevertheless, even though they both function as fathers to Mia, only one of the two had given her a set of 72 German-made colour pencils as a gift. Because these colour pencils were manufactured in Germany and were not cheap ones made in China, they satisfied her taste and interest, enabling the father who gave the gift to gain leverage over the other father. Red, fuchsia, crimson, blood red, rose, yellow, orange yellow, citron, tangerine, flesh colour. And light green, emerald, forest green, grass green. With an overwhelming array of colours spread before her eyes, lucky Mia gains
the innocent and childish confidence that she will be able to draw every object around her with 72 colours. When Mia is drawing the outline of an object with a gray pencil, when she is colouring the skin of an object with a blue pencil, Mia’s mother realizes that her daughter has become larger than the size of her own shadow. Mia’s mother loves Mia, and Mia was sick often, and each time she got sick, five shades of colour would appear on her face—red, yellow, violet, green, and black—and Mia’s mother would also make herself absent during her husband’s absence. By Mia’s pillow there would be a square of chocolate and a glass of orange juice, but not Mia’s mother. Wet with sweat, in bed with a cold, Mia would rouse for a little while and drink the orange juice and fall sleep again under the damp blanket. When her mother would return late at night and gaze down at her sleeping daughter, because Mia is lucky, she would stir awake and ask her mother for a glass of cold water. When these things repeated themselves several times, the colour of Mia’s face would once again be white as milk and smooth as a baby’s bottom, but when Mia’s face turned dark as water and red as fire, when she recognized vaguely that the scene she was witnessing was losing some unknowable thing, the colours of objects became unfixed and began to waver. Therefore the early morning would become a dark blue rage, the afternoon would become a crimson resignation, the evening would become a gray silence, and all the colours would, all at once, turn dark as night. These things happen whenever Mia is sleeping, whenever she is opening her journal, whenever she is engrossed in watching television, whenever she is climbing a jungle gym, whenever she is being warned that she is too young to drink coffee, whenever she is passing a note to the student sitting in front of her. And whenever she thoughtlessly looks away, the objects return to their original colour in perfect order.

When I grow up, I’m going to buy a fountain pen, says Mia. Do you know you can kill someone with a fountain pen? she asks. I read that in a book somewhere. If you drop the pen down on a person’s head from high up and at the right angle, the sharp tip will pierce right into the head. It’s because of acceleration. I read that from a detective story.

But of course, Mia has no desire to kill anyone; in fact, she doesn’t even understand the words “death” or “kill.” She is a lucky child, and she doesn’t possess enough feelings to kill someone, let alone has she had the chance to; she doesn’t yet know that some people can kill a person in the absence of hatred or loathing or malice or anger. She
doesn’t yet know that rather than trying to aim the tip of a fountain pen at someone’s forehead from a tall building, it is far more effective to drive the pen’s pointed metal tip into someone’s neck, a fact she would have learned if she read more books. But she was only interested in detective novels, and because there were more things she didn’t know than what she knew, her world was simple; and for that reason, she is lucky. Anyhow, when I grow up, I’m going to buy a fountain pen, she says. I like the way it sounds. Fountain pen.

Mia, who more or less has everything, who was always told she could have anything, thinks she could construct her world exactly the way it is with 72 colours, that she could fill in the shadows of already existing objects, each with its own shade, that she could erase even the shadows, that she could perhaps kill a person. If she has the power to kill, she also has the power to save. Therefore, nothing is impossible. Mia, who has everything or is able to have everything, thinks she is able to do anything. Of the two of Mia’s fathers Mia’s mother goes back and forth between, one Father is unaware of the other’s existence while the other Father is aware of everyone’s existence. Mia moistens her lips with the tip of her tongue. Because she doesn’t yet have a clear understanding of acceleration, she has no concept of the speed at which an incident arrives at ruin once it occurs, no concept of the velocity at which emotions expand once they begin to swell and, ultimately, explode. She had once seen on television the visual recreation of how space came to be; the great explosion, that round and lovely thing like a wreath—she tried to draw that scene with 72 colour pencils, but no matter how many lines she drew, there were always two colours missing and she, who had no concept of the colours she lacked, proudly showed her drawing to her fathers, and perhaps even to her mother, and one thought Mia had drawn a flower bouquet and another thought she had drawn the entrails of a beast. While she moistens the tip of her forefinger with saliva and erases the light’s outline, the smear of colours and their shadows become submerged in darkness. Naturally.