

Second Prize

The second-place prize goes to a hilarious and often surreal portrait of the “animal intuitive,” whose profession may seem unbelievable to many readers. The author tactfully acknowledges skepticism of the subject’s dog-whispering (to say nothing of cat- or horse-whispering), but the profile never condescends to its subject. Trusting pet owners are allowed to articulate their beliefs, and the author leaves room for readers to form their own judgments of the subject’s freewheeling sessions, which are described with raucous immediacy: “Susan recites her litany of the aging dog’s behavioral woes to Elizabeth, each word spiraling in an increasingly anxious pitch.” The author clearly didn’t hesitate to question the profession’s questionable premise, and yet the writing is sympathetic and engrossing rather than incredulous. The pacing is well controlled, with a vivid, immersive opening that brings readers right into the subject’s appointment with the owner of a dog that has been eating her own excrement. Biographical detours are tucked neatly between sessions with patients. Second prize is awarded to *Animal Instincts: A Profile of Elizabeth Wallace* by Jack Moskow.