

RICHARD DOWNING

from Juked #6, Spring 2009

THE TIP

– *Manuel Antonio, Costa Rica*

My beach breakfast of black beans and rice  
is of interest to the tan and brown spotted dog  
who circles the cement tables and stools each morning,  
pausing to pee on the occasional palm.

Moments ago he was on his back  
scrunching his ass into the sand  
for whatever reason dogs do this.

My brain has dollars colliding with *colones*  
as I try to figure out a reasonable tip.  
Now this dog of many mixes  
is ready for whatever I have chosen  
to leave on my plate.

He would be a good dog to take back home with me  
but I know he belongs here in the land  
of the not-quite-empty plates.

He knows as only a dog can know  
that I know nothing about peeing  
on the base of a palm,  
the cold, coarse touch of the deeper sand,  
and the sadness of the coins  
that I leave on the table.