

COURTESY THE ARTIST; NANCY MARGOLIS GALLERY, NEW YORK CITY; AND GROSS MCCLEAF GALLERY, PHILADELPHIA



*Bed's Edge*, a painting by Aubrey Levinthal, whose work was on view last year at Nancy Margolis Gallery, in New York City.

You have to understand that we were going to break up anyway; for years we'd been looking for reasons, and of course if you hadn't been born we would have separated much earlier. That afternoon I was furious with you but also unsure: you were barely three years old but you were very self-determined, and when you saw that poor abandoned puppy in the garbage bin on the corner, you picked him up and went right on walking. I told you we couldn't keep him, but there was no way to make you understand. I was amazed that there was no crying—you were a crier but you didn't cry then, which in some way revealed to me that you existed, that I couldn't fool you anymore. You stroked

the dog and named him Cosmo, and as we walked home I felt overpowered. I can think of no other word: overpowered. I understood while we were walking that right then a struggle was beginning, and it was one I would lose a thousand times: the struggle that perhaps now, with these words, I'm definitively losing.

I opened the door convinced, willing to respect your decision, and at first your mother agreed. But that night, after some hours of false harmony, the escalation of mutual accusations began, until finally she said: *We already have one*. I asked how she could possibly talk about you as a pet. She went quiet, and I think I felt the fanfare of triumph, but then, after arguing about many