

Werewolf Juggles the Moon

©Steve Klepetar 2004

The Werewolf Eats a Drunk

Hungry in new full moon, the werewolf
eats a cat, spits out hair and bones, mews
in the alley, chasing his tail. He climbs
a fence, balances on tiptoes, sings weird
tunes to the spotty face nailed to sky.

He eats an owl, takes on its ancient face,
tiny moon wrinkled in a silver bath.
A train chuffs east, sirens wail down the
boulevard. Without a conscience, he owns
the night. Sneaking by river, he snags fish

and sleeping swans, eats mallards and laps
cool water with his riveted tongue. Slick
as mud he moves nearly invisible, more felt
than seen, something absent, fierce and old.
On the corner near three bars, across from

La Luna, he eats a cilantro spicy drunk
hunched by a lamppost, nearly ninety proof.
On two legs he stumbles home, climbs in
through the window and lies down in bed by
his wife, who sighs and shifts beneath her sheet.

The Werewolf Calls His Mom

She is doing laundry, tells him how she hauls
each load to the basement and how she really
doesn't mind. She washes so little now. Her

elevator is slow and the security mirror
in the corner has a long, black crack,
but all in all the building is safe and clean,

her neighbors more pleasant than she expected
given the changing population.. "Some are Indian,"
she says, "Some black. There are Chinese and

Koreans, Puerto Ricans and a few old Europeans
like me. We have the United Nations here."
She tells him about the foreign films she's seen

in the theater walking distance from her place,
the one that used to show porno movies
twenty years ago. She talks about declining

health among her friends, people he knew
slightly when he was a boy, before he roamed
the night streets without mercy, tearing victims'

throats. Her deep, even voice and dull stories
calm his furry mind, dim the pounding blood
beneath his eyes. She talks and talks expecting

little in return, his grunts enough, between bites
of dog food straight from the can, his appetite
terrible now, so near the full moon. When she

hangs up, he swallows the phone. All night
he hears it ringing through his stomach wall,
carries its gurgling summons, its warning, its weight.

Werewolf Jogs

Don't get me started – hairy
legs sticking out of those
short shorts, sweat-splotched
tee shirt (gray shows through
best), some real huffing and
puffing and what's the point?
Blisters on your paw pads?
Shin splints when you go
bipedal too long at a stretch?
Eat a terrified sheep out in
some pasture under gleaming
moon or a well-fed dog out of
someone's yard and you're fat
that week. Go hungry and
you're thin, that's nature's law.
Yet you run and you run, CD
player stuck to your long ear,
listening to Howlin' Wolf no
doubt, or Los Lobos, fragments
of icy stars exploding in your
brain with every crashing stride.

The Werewolf Writes a Letter

Melodramatic gesture, inking his troubles on paper, here in the days of email, text messaging, IM. Might as well write with a quill, dipping the tip into his own moon-sick blood. "Oh soul friend, I was a gentle creature once, blah, blah, blah..." And the clumsy envelope, and licking the stamp? Come on, it's all crap anyway. Who will he mail it to? Who doesn't know that he ate his share of meat even then, spat curses at anyone who cut him off driving, thrust his will into the world as much as any of us? Tonight he will tear out of his shirt again and leave the usual trail of blood. He will eat and dance through the throbbing veins of night, chasing down alleys with rats. One evening, coming home from work, his old friend will find a letter in the box, familiar name and an unknown address, an appeal across years of silence and negation, a crazy confession he won't even begin to believe.

The Werewolf Attends a Political Rally

It's by invitation only, of course
but how could that stop a moon
beam walker like him? He slides
through shadows on stadium grass,
faithful feel strange shivers along
their necks, shudders ripple through
the crowd. Collective hair stands
on end, unease mistaken for thrills.
Overhead, helicopters swirl, air
thick with confidence. Concession
stands sell hot dogs, cokes and
victory, but what strikes him most
is how open these people are, how
unprotected their jugulars, faces
sweet and childlike in September sun.

The Werewolf and the Moon

Showerhead of light
in blue-black pool
of sky, his tail

balloon, the boat
in which he sails
across tides of

toothy lust.
How he paddles
with hairy

hands, how deep
the green
ocean beneath

dreaming eyes.
Lustrous pearl
on a long and

beautiful neck,
shining mirror
for his true face.

One day soon
his tongue
will reach that

sweet wafer,
lick its sugary
surface bare.

I Am the Walrus, I am the Werewolf, Coo-Coo-Ca-Choo

Sometimes, after a good night of sex
or the way a patch of sun strikes
his furry back or just the right, mysterious
cocktail of serotonin and alpha waves
the blood still sings in his werewolf veins.

And so he bounds against limits
of the world, leaping with crazy joy
rising in his throat like a furious tide,
hurricane strong, irrational exuberance
with the market down, jobs scarce

and politicians tasting worse than usual.
Times like these he rises in the night,
beats his chest. Crickets hum along roadside
grass, bats outlined against a flashbulb moon.
Werewolf surfing on the long curl of night.

Werewolf Discusses Gay Marriage on the Bus

He sees nothing wrong with it provided
neither groom decides to wear a wedding
dress, which offends his sense of style.
“Live and let live”, he says, wiping bits
of gristle from his jaws. On the bus
his neighbor disagrees, citing Scripture –
Noah, animals parading two by two.
“To reproduce, you see, takes male
and female – God’s law and nature’s
written plain.” Werewolf sees
it in his wooly mind, animal weddings
on a boundless sea, bears bent beneath
the Huppa and giraffes, necks twined
in a love knot; rabbits exchanging vows.
Imagine kids hurling rice, piling inches
thick on the pitching deck, and even, in
some webby corner of the ark, a ceremony
meant to join black widow spider and her mate.

Werewolf's Chestnut

Whose fangs these are I think I know,
When full moon blooms, then out they grow.
This shadow dancer will appear
As human blood begins to flow.

Consult the ancient gypsy seer.
She may not wish to speak from fear,
But bear the venom of her snake;
She'll tell you what you need to hear.

Just wander by the quiet lake
Where beasts slink down their thirst to slake
And if you're quiet as you creep
The moonlight may reveal an ache

As powerful as it is deep –
Fur and claw and howl and leap:
A haunted thing that cannot sleep,
A haunted thing that cannot sleep.

The Werewolf Considers Retirement

It's nearly four o'clock
on a Thursday
afternoon and time
stretches toward
evening, an achy back
twisting for relief.

Puffy clouds, little wind
– he thinks “I have been
at this for nearly thirty
years.” How little it
takes to stir
his memory to nostalgia
now! The gypsy camp,
an old woman reading
palms, shadow on
shadow in a world still
mainly black and white.
A violin, sting of tooth,
scent of blood.

Or was it that at all?
What he remembers
most is letting go, the
openness of everything,
especially when first
snow would fall, cold
world dotted with
spotty tracks,
sounds pouring into
his pointed
ears, nostrils
flooding with smells.

Werewolf at the Bar

Gone are the days when he roamed
centerfield, sleek shadow streaking
grass. Hit well too, to all fields, and
though his power numbers weren't
great, he could beat out bunts, steal
a base. Beat you with his glove and
legs. To stay in shape, he read once,
a ballplayer would have to play a
doubleheader a day and run

three miles. But that didn't take the
traveling into account, those bus
rides through heat and dust, hostile
crowds and bad calls, gobbling
teenagers behind bleachers after
night games, all that pop and cotton
candy in their blood. He ate a
centerfielder once, a quick blonde
kid who played college ball

downstate, tasted like honey and
fresh farm milk. Now he drinks
Grain Belt and watches the Twins
on TV, munches pretzels until
the salt goes hard on his lolling
tongue. Outfielders make him think
of oatmeal cookies at the kitchen
table, his mom's voice and the smell
of sweat and infield dirt, but pitchers

tend to eat stringy and tough,
and forget catchers, tasting
of deception, all haunches and gut.

Werewolf Gets a Cell Phone

It used to be so easy, just howl
beneath the bath of moon,
pee in high grass.

Tear out a few throats, wake
with shredded clothing bathed
in blood, a simple life. But
now he's in touch with friends
in many woods. Growls bounce
off satellites, spring earthward
faster than his fangs uncoil.

Music spills from silver bullet
phone, a wild Christmas dance
that has him leaping tiptoe over
underbrush with sheepish joy.

Werewolf at the Mall

In five minutes his head
begins to throb
and by the time
he's walked the circuit
of shops, he's mad, another
hairy lunatic driven to rage
in cinnamon scented air.

When he tries to buy
a suit, the salesman warns
him that they charge
for alterations, security
follows as he fingers belts
and ties. He sips
a frappacino and his larynx

constricts, his hair, in need
of product, stands on end.
At the sporting goods store
he window-shops
the guns, black eyes
settling on a small Beretta
no bigger than a phone.

By the time he stumbles
to his car, packages bursting
from green shopping
bags, the parking lot is full
of cats and teenage girls, slim
bellies bare
and pierced with jagged pins.

Werewolf in the Wind

Werewolf, werewolf, bathed in moon,
Hides in shadows, moving soon –
What fierce, hairy lupine paws
Tearing throats with bloody claws.

Meat for dinner, meat for snack,
Never fears a heart attack.
Blood his sauce and flesh his pie,
Atkins friendly diet guy.

Is he sorry afterwards?
Remorseful prayers, remorseful words?
Or when he wakes in human form
Does he still love the wolfish norm?

If you saw him passing by
With moonlight gleaming in his eye,
Would you recognize him? True,
That old werewolf could be you.

The Werewolf Counts His Change

Two quarters, one nearly black
around the rim, two shiny
dimes, a sad nickel and twelve
pennies, copper, gum grey
and algae green, eighty-seven
cents, metallic sweat jingling
in the pockets of his jeans.

Kiss it goodbye, a handful
of change, just something
to count out for coffee or
dump in a gesture of largesse
into the tip cup or panhandler's
open palm.
"I hate change" the werewolf
growls.

Without change, they say there
is no growth, but he knows
better, changing,
changing in his monthly
bath of silver light, tingling
in his groin spreading
through legs, chest and arms,
spilling shower of pin pricks
to fingers and toes, choking
language as it forms in stretching
snout, change as power
thrusting raw, up and out into night.

The Werewolf Attends a Play

It's *Death of a Salesman*
and he has a strategy for getting
through the terrible things
that happen onstage, broken
father trembling at the abyss
of dreams.

His own cubs have turned out
better, but mainly he roots
for Bernard, the nerdy neighbor
boy who turns out well, plays
tennis and pleads
a case before the supreme court.

"What's the secret Bernard?"
"Law School Willie, law school."

Nobody dast blame this wolf!
For a werewolf there's no rock
candy at the bottom of the well.
He's out there in the greenwood
with his animal magnetism and his
fangs and when they don't bare
their jugular veins, that's an
earthquake. A werewolf's got to
dream, boy, it comes with the territory!

Werewolf in the Rain

Wet lips, wet fur, so good
on his hot and hairy chest.
He leaps in puddles like a child.

Tonight he hides in the park
near an old oak by river's edge,
watching rain pock water's lithe
and silvery surface.

If he could be a fish, he'd swim
between rocks, wriggle
along the stony, shallow bottom
where shadows move. He would
cast off everything, his burning
teeth and appetite, the way his eyes
cut through mist and night, even
the desperate music of his lungs.

Werewolf Drinks Alone

After Li Bai

Blood from cupped paws, under falling
leaves; I drink alone, for no friend is near.
Actually, I've eaten all my friends
and much prefer the solitude. No need
to beckon the bright moon, who always
beckons me, for I am her shadow, I spring
to life at her command. You think the moon
never takes a sip of blood? Oh, look
at her lips, smeared from deep draughts,
her kohl-dark eyes sensual and wide, ears
delicate and always open to sailors' screams.
May I dance in her shining arms and feel
her fingers on my tingling, moon-drunk fur
until the final wave of darkness pulls me down.

Wordsworth Meets the Werewolf:

A Lyrical Ballad in the Language of Common Men (*Snakeskin* 12/04)

I met a werewolf in the dale,
So hairy on the bog.
“Good’en good sir” I greeted him.
He gobbled up my dog.

I told him that he should not be
So quick to eat a hound,
But he just growled and said that he
Would twist my head around

And bring me to his werewolf cubs
For supper or a snack.
And so I grabbed my gun and fired
A bullet in his back.

He uttered up a curse that I
was sore ashamed to hear,
And howled into the moonlit tarn,
It made me shake with fear.

And for a moment when I saw
His eyes so fiery red,
I wondered if he always looked
So coarse and so ill bred

Or if when he just wandered free
Upon the mountains high
Dame Nature soothed his angry heart
And fed him berry pie

And slaked his thirst with water cool
From some clear, rocky spring.
And then I thought “don’t be a fool,
He’s not a human thing.”

And so I left him there that night
Screaming out in pain,
But sometime when the moon is bright
I’ll seek him out again

And offer him a humble crust
And my good hand as well.

For all who live in Nature's trust
Will know that creatures fell

Like werewolves who stalk in the night
Are much the same as we –
They shun the daytime and the light
For starlit poesy.

And sometimes when my heart sinks low
my face so cold and pale,
I'll comfort take that I did know
the werewolf in the dale.

Werewolf Leaves the Path

Old dogs, new tricks and
he's immediately lost.
Shadows roll and crash,
a ladder dangles from
orange moon. All night
he climbs, feeling the hurt
against foot pads and paws,
raw ache of so much cold light.

When will he reach the slit
in that broad face?
Nothing will prevent his
slipping in, or curling round
the feather bed of night.
Far below, cicadas serenade
the trees. Forest shapes
itself around his anguished eyes.

Werewolf Stands

Here I stand, glued together with sand
and rain, a phantom in the rising moon.
Evening darkness pours in from the lake
of sky so early now. Stars powder
the upper roadway and black limbs
of nearly leafless trees hang in the air.
Not a soul comes toward me
and I am drunk with solitude, fierce
with possibility. Nothing can keep me
out but my own slender threads of restraint.
I gather my urges like sweet berries
in my terrible hands. Even the river
sings to my strengths: stealth and sinuous
motion over rocks. I wait, I am patient
and silent because I love how waiting
feels in muscle, lungs and veins, the long,
slow pull of blood rising. Summer's
green distances have shrunk to this:
a fist and white breath exploding in the cold.

Werewolf Sits In

Werewolf sits in with a bluegrass band
playing the local coffee house.
Guitars, mandolin, young guy on electric
bass. Harmonica and slide guitar, banjo
sometimes, local men with good hearts, little
need for cash, singing gentle songs of rural
days, bootlegging tunes, union songs.
Rafters fill with their wood smoke harmonies.

Werewolf can't play nothing, not even
bongo drums but boy, can he sing
the blues, howling high notes, wailing
like a saxophone made of flesh
and fur, leaving great chunks of his dangerous
self on stage, or flinging clumps of sweaty
hair out into the audience, little souvenirs
for the girls to sweep into their bags and hide.

Werewolf Juggles the Moon

With each toss, tides
roar and bite at the gaping
shore. This is where he

stands, straddling great ribs
of sand while hand over
hand he juggles the moon.

See how she dances
in the sky, her puckered
mouth open, gasping with

surprise. See how she leaps
from him and falls, desperate
cycles of leaving and too fond

return. How families gather,
setting up around him with
blankets and food, picnics

casting off brilliant scent
of apples, meat and spice.
What hot work, how he feels

the ache in bent and springy
knees, elbows and rotator
cuff working to keep it all

orbiting his wild hair, moon
and moon and moon swirling,
tugging muscle, veins and fur.