

Yooper Tails

Born in a litter of three, a small one but enough extra mouths to feed, he soon

learned to scabble by the light of the Marquette moon through tall snowdrifts

to neighbors' mailboxes for their supermarket coupons and welfare checks.

He mutated into one of a child's beloved stuffed animals during a lunar eclipse,

the smallest were-husky transforming into human form, raiding the fridge

and watching Teletubbies while his clan rode snowmobiles and mined for copper.

Posing for photos at the K-Mart, he dreamed of Facebook albums portraying

his becoming the youngest valedictorian at Michigan Tech or a blue-ribbon

winner at the local kennel club show. He held a venison pasty like a microphone

and crooned “Werewolves of London” with wanderlust,
bloodlust and manlust.

He anticipated bellyflopping on the curling rink and ice fishing
with buddies

on Lake Superior, mushing drunk through Sault Ste. Marie after
ogling Canadian

mean girls, Ontario apex-predator queens, hot haunches locked
in thermal

underpants beneath field-hockey skirts, none of them straying
anywhere near

sniffing distance without the aid of a case of Labatt’s and a
choke collar. Winter is

here in the living room, teenbrood shivering next to the stuffed
bear, elk eyes

beaming as gory stories are sprayed with beer foam by boys who
want to spread

warm pelts, their ancestral hunting lodge a flurry of myths and
beds unmade.

One of the ice maidens slips away: "It's just my time of the
month." It's his too,

off he goes, fur riding up his nape, slips out the side door to find
her in the yard,

melting too, no ersatz cosplay but life doggy-style, whiplash
pheromones driving

a growl in his throat, the trees into white umbrellas, men into
closed hard things.

The stories he will tell later in the pack will cause tiny mouths to
nip his ears,

tails wagging, a display of humanity to send the she-women into
a feline fury.

-John F. Buckley and Martin Ottma