

Wolftown was thought of in the summer of 2024, when I asked my dear friend and roommate for a writing prompt. They closed their eyes and looked wistful for a moment before saying "Werewolves who escape." It was perfect.

I thought a lot about what a werewolf is. There are a hundred examples I could pull from to find the common poetic allegories, but I didn't have to look very far before I knew what it was for me. I've struggled with addiction for most of my life. The effort it took to save my own life five years ago by committing to recovery was near indescribable. The intensity of the experience is difficult to reflect on even now, and activates my whole body to think about- so I knew I had to talk about it.

In my story, people don't become creatures under the full moon- rather they transform when a feeling becomes so strong that their emotions become their body. I can't describe what I went through in any literal way, but I can tell you what it was like. I can talk about becoming addicted, the way my community was affected and in turn affected me, as well as the ferocity it took to change everything about my life. While Luna is not herself actively addicted to any substances, the transformation itself becomes addictive. Through this chasing of extremes and desperation for a personal sense of power in her own life, I feel I can give a more honest description of what addiction is.

But one major frustration I've always had with people who tackle these themes is the sensationalized aspect, and the lack of sympathy given to the addict. While I am literally turning Luna and her friends into animals to reflect their emotional self image, there is a profound tenderness in the story that I strive to make obvious. Everyone has someone they're taking care of, everyone is keeping an eye on each other, and the grief that drives them to addiction is born of love.

The novel is also deeply Canadian, in a number of ways. Most obviously it takes place in the Okanagan Valley, a desert near where I grew up. It's a desert unlike quite anywhere else, in large part because it sits so high north. But this isn't the only thing that makes it Canadian.

Vancouver BC has one of the most severe homelessness crises in the world. This is in large part because Vancouver has a milder climate than any other major city in the country, and police and other public services will regularly put homeless people on busses bound for the west coast so they can survive the winter. While Vancouver is the epicenter, everywhere I've been in the surrounding area suffers the same tragedy. I grew up watching these people be forgotten, I learned the etiquette of ignoring them or calling someone depending, and I watched my neighbors treat these people as vermin. As I grew up and became an at risk youth, I had a foot in both worlds. The spectrum of homelessness and poverty is something that will never leave my mind, and makes itself clear in my writing.

Beyond that I have very specific fears and criticisms about Canada's response to climate change. As a resource extraction economy we are financially unprepared to move towards renewable resources, no matter what we posture. We could be, but these sustainable choices aren't made, because Canada is first and foremost an oil company- as was accidentally said by our own prime minister. Within my story, the grief which has plunged the town into addiction is strongly fueled by environmental collapse and decisions made at a federal level.

The multiple perspectives was a recent decision, guided by Matt, which greatly strengthens the story. Part of the reason I chose the sections I did was because they best highlight the way I've focused on giving each character a distinct voice. Dan, a tired old queen, is depressed but is still the most comedic narrator and provides a more adult view of the town. Lydia thinks in verbs and short sentences, as the former captain of the rugby team she loves making a plan and has taken on the role of the detective in the story. Luna takes a more poetic approach, and being the most openly emotional makes her the perfect candidate for being patient zero of the transformations that will soon take over the town.

While Wolftown is currently sitting at around 13,000 words, I've only selected recent excerpts to present for this module. This is, in part, because through the mentorship provided by Matt Jarvis I have been able to literally double my word count since coming here. I want what I submit to reflect what I've learned in the time of this module, because it has been one of the most valuable experiences possible for my writing career.

One major thing I learned is how to simply make myself write even when I do not have confidence in what comes next. I came to Wales wanting to apply myself to the skills I need to turn writing into my career, and Matt's confidence in me made the biggest difference. He referred to it as "turning out rivets" when I simply need to get the work done, and I can come back and polish it later. In doing so I've had to fall back on creative instinct because I've committed myself to a certain pace. This, in combination with regular check ins, has increased my output considerably. What's more, I'm having fun.