

A Wolf In Sheep's Skin

William Lenard

The Beast found me pacing
like a dog protecting his sheep.
He comes to hunt in the
shape of a Wolf.

I split myself in two
so He doesn't know who to devour.
Amused by gimmicks, He now seeks
my sheep in the woods.

“I am so hungry. Will you feed me.
Nothing above my weight, take what we need,
doesn't matter how many sheep
will no longer sleep.”

Hands have less value than sheep.
I cut a finger off each day and
feed it to the Wolf. He spits out the
fingernail and waits until I have none left to offer.
I pray to the dog for more hands to harvest.

The dog finds false disciples
dressed in sheepskin.
In exchange, I build furred replicas
for him to guard.

The sheep have no names.
The sheep have no faces. Count
the sheep like candles in a church.

The Wolf sits and numbers the hours
He's gone without eating. I step from the house
and ask the Wolf if there's anything He misses.

He howls, "counting clouds."

The Wolf turns to me and says the
dog is losing his language.
The only words he speaks now is woof.

There's denial in the words
that hold no sound. Make a promise that
we'll never drown. My voice is tired
from all this weight I carry.

The dog watches the Wolf
eyeing the sheep in the woods.

“I used to run, now I wait
for you to come and ask how many
I’ve counted.”

I say the number you want and
the hunger for sheep overcomes

The dog sends a woof as an alarm
to the foreseen killing
of the sheep but none will hear his sound.

I have no more words to keep
myself from collapsing. Let my body
down like a bloated ram. The house I built
is drowning in empty hands with missing fingers.

No longer false, the sheep come to the door
with open mouths filled with words I once
knew how to spell. Their whispers sail to the
Wolf's ears and He begins His hunt.

A design in the way He runs,
following instincts,
tearing forward none will stop.

"I've melted all that you had
and ate until my belly was full.

I took their skin to wear
as a mockery."

My name belongs to the Wolf.

I find Him standing behind the house made of
white oak with stolen words spilling
from His split tongue.

"You are no longer a simple man. I own your
hands, your dog has no voice and your sheep rot
in my gut."

I have no way to write the words
I am trying to remember.
Please tell me my name.