

## Canis Lupus

(1) Lycanthropes

(1) Werewolves

(2) To you

(3) They are *animals*

(5) That's what you call them

(8) Non-human, beasts, any number of other cruel words

(13) Would you say the same if you knew I was one of them?

(21) One of those vile 'creatures' you despise so much. You would ask me why I didn't tell you.  
My own mother.

(34) How could I, after the way you spoke of them. The first time I changed, long fangs and sharp claws, I was terrified. You taught me I was something monstrous, something to be feared.

(55) Every time since I'd lock myself in my room, you chalking it up to typical teenage angst. It probably looked like it; I hid all my mirrors, unable to even chance that I might see myself in them. I'd sit in the closet, where if I tried hard enough, I could disappear into its darkness.

(89) Until one day. The transformation came like it normally did. I assumed my spot in the dark, but then my stomach growled. I froze, but reasoned it wouldn't be the end of the world if I left to grab food. It was the first time I had left my room like that, I was almost proud. And then I heard the lock click. You came home earlier than I expected. The front door opened and I panicked. Unsure what you'd do if you saw me like this, I fled.

(144) I stumbled at first, unaccustomed to the feeling of running with these legs. I ran into the woods behind our house. I had never felt the grass underneath my feet like this, the wind as it whistled through my mane. I was suddenly aware of so many new sensations, as if I had been let

in on a secret. I could hear the rustle of a rabbit retreating into a bush several yards away, smell the rich earthy scent that accompanies rain. I weaved between the low-hanging firs with ease, like a sleek silver bullet, this body streamlined for speed. It was almost exhilarating. I heard the churning of water and felt compelled to follow it. Gaining confidence, I picked up speed; trees blurring into brushstrokes in my peripheral. I found the source of the sound, a waterfall that emptied into a small pond.

(89) I had never known this was back here. I pattered around the edge of the water, approaching slowly. The moon's reflection rippled across the nearly pitch black surface, cascading in lazy waves. I peered into it and was met with piercing amber eyes. I blinked, and they blinked back at me. And for the first time, I wasn't afraid. For the first time, I saw that long snout, that dark muzzle, and thought 'me'. And that was when I understood that everything you had said to me was wrong.

(55) Your disgust stemmed from the idea that this was something that could be 'controlled', as if I can stop myself from feeling this way, *being* this way, just like that. As if it's a choice. You treat it like a prison. But when I am in that form, mother, I have never felt more free.

(34) When I howled under the full moon that night, beneath stars that hung like suspended crystals of sugar, I heard an answer. Distant, but it was there, and I knew I was not alone.

(21) What you don't understand, is that this isn't an affliction, it's an answer. An explanation for things that never added up.

(13) I'm done justifying my existence to someone who never intended to understand it.

(8) But if you really do insist, dear mother

(5) Fine, I'll be a wolf

(3) If that's what

(2) you want

(1) me

(2) to be