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Sharp Teeth: A Novel



Synopsis

An ancient race of lycanthropes has survived to the present day, and its numbers are growing as the initiated convince L.A.'s down and out to join their pack. Paying no heed to moons, full or otherwise, they change from human to canine at will "and they're bent on domination at any cost. Caught in the middle are Anthony, a kind-hearted, besotted dogcatcher, and the girl he loves, a female werewolf who has abandoned her pack. Anthony has no idea that she's more than she seems, and she wants to keep it that way. But her efforts to protect her secret lead to murderous results. Blending dark humor and epic themes with card-playing dogs, crystal meth labs, surfing, and carne asada tacos, Sharp Teeth captures the pace and feel of a graphic novel while remaining "as ambitious as any literary novel, because underneath all that fur, it's about identity, community, love, death, and all the things we want our books to be about" [Nick Hornby, *The Believer*].

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This debut novel at first seems strange, bizarre, difficult to take the first bite. But then, the story gets going, and you forget that it's written in free verse- except that it doesn't rhyme, and you know how I am about rhymes. But still, What's not to like about a story About werewolves? or was it

were dogs? Prowling the streets of LA, changing at will, killing and devouring without leaving a trace - sometimes not even bloody tissue, licking the ground Ajax clean. Yet being civilized enough to know that the most important dog in the pack is the bitch. Three packs, one led by a lawyer at first, who gets outmaneuvered in an ironic kind of way and forced to hide in the guise of woman's best friend until he can regroup and reclaim, and remark his territory. But Lark has a plan to infiltrate and conquer. It's also about Anthony the dogcatcher. Who doesn't really want to be like the rest of dogcatchers, that is "Perhaps over time he will become like them with their permanent stains and bitter dispositions. But Christ almighty, he thinks, I hope not." Anthony feeds the dogs tacos that he can't afford and one day he falls in love. Then there's the cop Peabody investigating missing people and dogs and bloody trails of big red prints. These dogs don't play poker, preferring the game of bridge, especially Cutter and Blue, who have a knack for the game. They follow Lark and the Ukan way, but things get complicated when their fellow bridge players turn out to be quite different than they seem and there's also the new pack...

One may at first be put off by the notion of a werewolf novel as an epic poem. In the minds of many - too many - poetry is an aged, calcified form, difficult to penetrate, and approached not for fun but out of a sense of intellectual obligation. Yet any such concerns should be immediately thrust aside by any potential reader of Toby Barlow's clever, compelling debut novel, "Sharp Teeth." Barlow's plot, at its surface, is a straight forward modern werewolf tale - a pack living in LA under the command of Lark have big plans, having to do with dog pounds. From there the story branches out into many directions - a love story between a werewolf woman and the novel's protagonist, several survivors of a decimated pack dealing with their loneliness, and other wolves hungry for the vengeance of blood. The poetry in which all of this comes is delivered in language at once subtle and raw, visceral as Barlow's topic and modern his book's setting. For example, when writing about a lover's wonder about how well he knows his love. He worries that this is beginning to feel like driving a car through the mountains, finding a great song on the radio and then as you pass out of its range hearing it flicker and fade. Snap, pop and then it's gone. Or another musing: Tomorrow she knows the tactics will have to change, her luck has held three times and Lark has always said, luck is stupid as a cow and blind as a bat. What would you do to protect the love you have? Would you kill? Would you hunt to kill? Would you kill without mercy? And if you wouldn't then how precious is your love?

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