

Two Poems

STEPHANIE BURT

Prayer for Werewolves

Someone will probably love you for who you are.
If not, you'll still find friends,
friends who, given time, or given warning,
will probably gather around you, hold your hands,
and wrap you in soft coats and blankets till the violence
inside your body ends.

Someone will probably love you for who you are,
not just for who you labor to be.
Maybe you're lost in your skin today. Maybe you're burning
and wish you could tear it all off. Please don't. You are variously
a marvel, an athlete, a wilderness, a source of warmth
and a way to learn from fear.

When you have claws, your claws are yours, your ears
bristle and are yours; your irises
are citrine, pure, and yours. They let you see
through smog and pine thickets and into the future, where
you need no chains to feel secure,
and someone will probably love you for who you are:

then you will know each other's scents
and nuzzle or lope together. But for
now, you have friends,
who are not going anywhere. Please
stay here.

James Smith & Sons Umbrellas, Parasols, Etc.
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New Oxford Street

Into some lives a ton of rain must fall.
 Our bamboo or wicker or metal
 ribs, our tassels, our faux tiger-hide,
 our rainbow stripes and overlapping strips
 of smooth ultra-waterproof white polyvinyl chloride,
 cool to the touch
 even after a summer walk,
 can't help you then—
 not much,
 or not at all.

Nor can we propitiate those gods
 whose open hand or clenched
 fist over clouds and inlets says where and when
 and how long and hard it floods.
 For life's lesser troubles, however—
 too late for lunch, too early
 for the residential college ball—
 our shade can almost surely
 save you from mild folly,
 say, from arriving drenched,
 as well as from poorly dressed or persistent men.

We may hold hidden spikes, as well
 as hardwood handles, posts, and leather straps,
 the kind you can swing.
 Some of us are adept at all manner of social signaling.
 Others are weapons. No one is only one thing.