

POLAR VISION

I went to the beach on the night of the full moon. I am accustomed to walking on this slip of sand at all seasons and all hours. Here I meet the Muse. She reaches into my dreams, calls out of me the ghosts of my history, and with them shapes my future.

This night there were cold, moon-cast shadows and slabs of blue ice, braced one against the other, spread across the beach. This was a landscape I'd never seen, a wind-whipped, winter-sculptured world, a temporary ice-made rock formation along my slim, smooth straight of sand.

I tried to walk forward and my shoes slid beneath me over the sheer face of these frozen chunks. Strange and graceless was my body, sliding about in a dance without rhythm or choreography. But there was something connected too, something I could only understand with the instinctively animal part of me that braced its muscles against the wind. That part of me belonged on the rocks of ice that night, the part that didn't mind the wind stiffening my face and hands.

I wanted in that moment to be covered with coarse hair and to turn my long wolf nose to the moon and howl out my being. Or to race on all fours across those frozen slopes, with fresh snow dusting and whitening my polar fur. But I am dependent upon clothes to keep my blood from freezing, and I am ill-suited for survival in this hard-edged landscape.

We live with the illusion that we are able to shape our lives, and make them fit a pattern that we have chosen. Rather, our lives are shaped by a rhythm and a creation so vast and beautiful that the greatest force of human ingenuity can barely glimpse it.

Take some time to get ice cold this winter, out there in some frozen waste of a back lot or beach, or a forest with white branches dipped in homage to the season. Feel the clarity of thoughts sharpened by a blast of truth from winter's wind. Look up, look down, and feel the throb of your heart, warm and beating. Let go of all illusion, and be at peace.