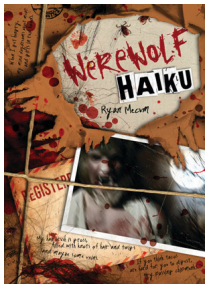
WEREWOLF HAIKU (HOW Books) is the third poetic meditation on famous monsters (the first two books in the series dealt with zombies and vampires) from writer Ryan Mecum (pictured), presented entirely in the Japanese style of 17-syllable doggerel. Mecum’s premise is that WEREWOLF HAIKU functions as a journal belonging to a nameless mailman/frustrated poet.

Our shy mailman’s verse is presented like diary entries, strung together with a rudimentary plot: The subject spends his days flipping letters through slots and avoiding eye contact with a certain attractive homeowner on his route, until a bite from a strange dog has him getting hairy, howling and finally bestowed with enough courage to ask his crush out on a real live date. For now, those blackouts and bloodstains from when the moon fattens seem to be just an unpleasant side effect.



The rigid haiku structure can feel gimmicky and irritating at first, but as patient readers adjust to the rhythm of the words, they can begin to appreciate two major assets that rescue WEREWOLF HAIKU from being merely a novelty item. First is the book’s gorgeous, sumptuous design; this thing is downright edible. The pages are designed to look like the inside of our protagonist’s actual journal, profusely illustrated with photos, stains, doodles, hair clumps, etc., to complement the sparse stanzas. The second big plus is Mecum’s skewed yet thoughtful tackling of the concept of lycanthropy. The best of this can be surprisingly introspective and almost melancholic:

When I hear dogs bark,
it’s odd that I comprehend
and sometimes agree.

You hate alarm clocks?
Try automatic sprinklers
with you in grass, nude.

Mecum isn’t shy about throwing out some hilariously nasty implications either:

When people eat corn
and spot them in their feces,
teeth are that way too.

My lice look like salt
and my ticks look like pepper
falling in my lunch

Either way, the book boasts a good number of entertainingly original takes on some threadbare material, and Mecum earns major points for his unusual slant. WEREWOLF HAIKU is definitely entertaining and looks fantastic, but be warned that at around 30 to 40 words per page and a total page count of a 137, this kind of book is like Jiffy Lube: you’ll be in and out in under an hour. Whether or not this warrants the $9.99 pricetag is up to the individual. Although, as the holiday season approaches, Fango readers may want to keep this title in mind as an excellent stocking stuffer for the beastlier names on their gift list.

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