

Coyote in the Dark

By scent or by sound
Or by some special sense
My dogs know a coyote's trespassing out there.
Should any moonshadow
Slip formlessly, silently
Through the nude willows,
They complain to the stars,
Summon me to the door,
Nervously milling about at my legs.
They plead for release from the leash.
They know the dark creature,
Though dog-like --
same paws, same claws,
Same meat-craving jaws --
Is a different
Dangerous,
Beast made of midnight.

Just as I recognized you at first sight,
When I danced at the door like a slavering dog,
Yearning to dash out and challenge.
My heart whimpered then
For the will to break loose,
To give chase and run wild by the water,
Offer my throat,
Nip and nuzzle all night,
Prance and leap high in the moonlight.

I did then as I now,
Apprehensive, unnerved
By the avid eyes gleaming
In the thickening black,
Turn my back to the door,
Murmur words meant to soothe,
Stroke the dogs,
Toss a treat,
Stifle one last disquieted growl,
Till I feel you have finally faded away,
A coyote in the dark.