



Breathe Deeply

Don Basingthwaite

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In the air, the scent of glory...

When his sept is slowly decimated by a mysterious epidemic known only as the "Snow Plague", Peter Ward, Glass Walker Garou from Toronto, embarks on a desperate search for the cure. His quest takes him into the lush and dangerous forests of the Amazon. Caught between the devious plot of Pentex and the mistrust of Amazonian Garou, his only hope is to find a single flower, both the carrier and the cure for the devastating plague.

It is a race against time as Pentex, the creator of the plague, hunts for Peter and his fellow Garou.

Breathe Deeply Details

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Author : Don Bassingthwaite

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Story says

I remember liking the book, and at the time not knowing anything about the White Wolf games. The book was released in '95, and I recall being utterly enthralled by the cover art.

Jesse says

My first foray into any kind of World of Darkness fiction, and it wasn't bad. I chose this book specifically because it's a Werewolf book, werewolves being a huge interest of mine, and because I'd long heard rumors that one of the characters was gay.

I already have some familiarity with the classic World of Darkness universe, being a fan of the "Vampire: The Masquerade - Bloodlines" video game, but I didn't know a whole lot about the Werewolf universe, and this was a good introduction. An impressive thing about the book is how it imparts all of the information about the werewolves and their outlying universe without feeling too expositional or info-dumpy. Plus, what exposition was there was interesting and well-imparted, so I enjoyed it.

While I didn't think that the plot itself was necessarily anything special, being a quest story about getting the cure to a mysterious disease, the stuff surrounding it intrigued me, that being the culture of the werewolves, the individual tribes, the characters and their interactions, and the overall feel of the universe. One of the things that really attracts me to the WoD universe lies right there in its title. It taps into the same dark, paranoid society as something like the X-Files, with a world full of mystery and unknowable secrets hiding just below the veneer of our so-called normal world. There's a dash of H.P. Lovecraft there too, with the knowledge of such dark and eldritch things being so all-encompassing and unfathomable that it can drive men to madness.

Don Bassingthwaite uses this theme well, even though most of the book takes place among characters who live within said secret society and are familiar with its ins and outs. It really captures that mid-90s sense of urban decay, malaise, and mistrust that really appeals to me. And the way that he contrasts the modernity of Peter (the Glass Walker main character) with the mysterious tribalism and arcane magicks of the rainforest was really well done. I also found that the book really came alive when indulging in the more fantastical elements of the universe, such as the scenes where Peter steps into the Umbra to speak with the spirits of technology, who are personified as humanoid creatures, or the scenes where the Garou interact with the Mokole tribe. It has a surreal, earthy mood to it all that I loved.

Aside from all of that, the characters are mostly well-drawn, though in the case of Steps-Lightly and Thunder Tiger, the oft-rumored gay couple I've heard so much about, could've used a little more nuance and development. I know they aren't the main characters, but a major subplot of the novel is about dealing with the ramifications of their relationship, being that Garou pairings are looked down upon in their society. Bassingthwaite briefly raises some interesting questions about traditionalism and blind adherence to sacred edicts, but these are mostly glossed over, and the handling of the homosexual aspects of the couple, while progressive, kind of feels a little awkward. There's literally a "I've got gay friends" moment when Steps-Lightly confronts Peter about his sexuality. But hey, it was 1995, the fact that the author deigned to include a positive gay couple at all is pretty cool, though it ended up not being the most interesting aspect of the book.

What was interesting, aside from the previously mentioned universe, was how Bassingthwaite depicted the

internal power struggles of the different Garou tribes. Everyone is incredibly flawed, none more so than Peter himself, and the author mines a lot of compelling drama out of this theme of selfishness vs. altruism, of going with the tribe or going with yourself, and while at first I found Peter a little insufferable, I found myself fascinated with him, and not only him, but the various ways that the many tribes interacted with each other, the ridiculous power pulling that occurs, even amongst people who are meant to work together. This is best illustrated with Brennan, a huge, bearish Fianna who initially clashes with Peter, but he also touches upon it throughout the novel, like when the characters meet the Mokole, whom they've always been on shaky terms with.

I really enjoyed this book, even though it wasn't perfect. The supporting characters were pretty broadly drawn, and most of the bad guys were generic at best and comically exaggerated at worst. However, it definitely piqued my interest in the universe of the Garou, and I plan to pick up more WoD novels set within the Werewolf universe.

Jess says

First read this in 1997(ish) - Hands down, one of my favorite novels as a kid.

Matt D says

It was pretty good for a White Wolf novel. I believe they did best with their earlier writing, when the novels were stand alone. The ending seemed to wrap up far too quickly, and far too conveniently. There was an abrupt, inexplicable change in personality of one character that seemed to happen without any true reason, and it made the entire series of interactions between that character and the main protagonist seem somewhat cheap. Other than that, though, it was a fairly solid book in the Werewolf: the Apocalypse genre.
