

## Wolves

To the Memory of Isaak Emmanuilovich Babel, 1894-1940

R. F. Tripp

They had pulled up the barriers and everyone was scurrying about, tending to small needs. Wolves, it was rumored, were tracking stragglers that had strayed from the assigned areas.

I knew about the wolves. I'd seen two the night before gnawing on a toddler, flipping it about, rolling it around like a lopsided ball. At first, the wolves just sat back and watched the thing, a curiosity. And when the tyke tried to right itself, the wolves would go at it again, pouncing altogether and at once from different angles in high, smooth, arching leaps. But here's the thing, that baby didn't cry a bit. I think I heard it laugh. Finally, the smaller of the two managed to tear an arm off and happily disappeared down an alley. The other then sunk its teeth into the nape of the child's neck and dragged it into a storm drain.

At that, I scampered back to the barriers. At the first post a Guardian pulled me in and gave me hell for being out after bells. He ripped the number off my jacket and gave me a month of restricted movement. I told him about the toddler and he noted it in his log.