

The Wolf

You walk along, weak with hunger, hoping for any tasty morsel to cross your path. Failing that a drink of cool water would do. You make your way to the lake. As you lean down to drink your reflection makes you cringe. You think to yourself how on earth did a handsome fellow like me ever get to be in such wretched condition. Hair all dull and scrappy, the tip of one ear bitten off by a surly bear in that awful skirmish, nose slightly bent from a run-in with a ground hog. You really gotta watch where you stick your nose. Even your best high note when you're howling at the moon sounds flat, wimpy. And your eyes well, they've lost the sly glint that used to dazzle. You got no family, no friends to wild away the hours with, no whiskey tucked away for those endlessly long nights in the woods. Where's your fan club you wonder? Who's rooting for you? You've forgotten you are a lone wolf. When you were young it served you well, bright eyed and bushy tailed you faced the world with certainty knowing exactly where you stood, knowing how to adapt and get by. You came and went confidently with disregard for etiquette and protocol. Back then you were striking. She wolves adored you, now it's doubtful they would give you a second glance. No, those days are gone. You're a bag of bones out here scrabbling for food like a goddamn raccoon. eating any ole' scrap of garbage.

It's your own fault. If you'd just joined the pack and developed some lasting relationships maybe you wouldn't be walking down this lonesome, narrow path. Ah, but the arrogance of youth, it steered you wrong. You start feeling sad and remind yourself not to dwell in the murky recesses of your otherwise brilliant mind. It's all in the past, nothing a good meal and sound night sleep won't fix. That is if you get some food and the raccoons aren't rabble rousing 'till all hours.

You decide to bed down and find accommodation in a hollowed out stump. The inside is alive with spiders but you're too tired to care. Besides, it's comfy and smells of evergreen moss, a soothing elixir. That night you dream of your first true love. Wow, she was a beauty. Her coat shone so glossy in the sunlight it looked chiseled from polished Mahogany but what really magnetized you were her fetching bluish green eyes. One morning she took off and didn't come back home. Not a word, no note. It broke your heart in two. In the dream she was dancing and held onto a gold thread and as she spun around and swirled her feet left the ground. She became enveloped in a majestic, long, golden cape with a hood that allowed her perfect pointed ears to poke through. She floated up ascending to heaven. She watched over you from there. She watched you sleep and saw you dreaming of her. It was comforting and when you woke the next day you were revived and optimistic. You tell yourself "Today will be a good day."

Frolicking would be a stretch but you do feel good and have a slight bounce to your flat-footed steps. You're moving along at a good clip but halt when a flash of red catches your eye. When you are closer, just beyond a thick stand of white birches, you spy a young girl wearing a red hoodie in the meadow. As you proceed up the path you notice she's carrying a rather large basket and gathering wildflowers. You stealthily move in her direction. Your green eyes are aglow with anticipation like when you were a wee pup waiting for your mother to drop a sliver of raw meat into your begging mouth. You think my now, wouldn't she be a tender treat for my grizzly jowls? You have no remorse, after all you are a predator. You summon your rusty wiles and approach her from behind but just as you're about to lunge she turns and says. "You startled me mister, I'm taking these treats and medicines to my granny and I'm late." "Well now, what sundry items lay in your burdensome load pray tell?" "Huh?" "What's in your basket?" She opens it and starts rummaging through. "Let's see, there's some medicinal herbs, eucalyptus, it's a decongestant you know, and peppermint tea for granny's tummy troubles, there's homemade sourdough bread and blackberry jam, "Oh and for dessert it looks like peanut butter cookies and brownies with flaky sea salt, plus a flask of brandy to sooth the poor dear's throat."

You think to yourself hum...if ya' play your cards right you'll dine on two meals tonight, one plump and tender, the other a tough old hide. The brandy will stave off the cold while you make your way back home to bed with a full belly. No insomnia tonight no sireeeee.

In a cordial tone you ask the girl where her granny lives and offer to escort her. Without hesitation she responds in a stern voice, "No." "I mean no thanks, I'll be there in no time, really, almost there" and she recites the address. You think poor dumb child, didn't your mother ever tell you not to confide in wolves? You issue another warning, "You really shouldn't be out all alone in these woods. Not everyone is as charitable as me." "Nope I'm good, just going to finish collecting this bunch of posies for my nana."

The rumbling in your abdomen reminds you it's supper time so you say "I have to be on my way now miss, got some place to be, I bid you farewell and uh safe travels." "Fine, whatever," she says and you hightail it over to granny's house to lie in wait. You think to yourself, "I still have it, I'm still in the game."