The Boy Who Didn’t Cry Wolf

An old Cherokee is teaching his grandson about life. "A fight is going on inside me," he said to the boy.

"It is a terrible fight and it is between two wolves. One is evil - he is anger, envy, sorrow, regret, greed, arrogance, self-pity, guilt, resentment, inferiority, lies, false pride, superiority, and ego." He continued, "The other is good - he is joy, peace, love, hope, serenity, humility, kindness, benevolence, empathy, generosity, truth, compassion, and faith. The same fight is going on inside you - and inside every other person, too."

The grandson thought about it for a minute and then asked his grandfather, "Which wolf will win?"

The old Cherokee simply replied, "The one you feed."

The Boy And His Wolf

The Boy

The door creaked open as he entered the house, cutting through the silence like an unsteady hand with a knife. No parents home yet, probably still out working. He threw his satchel down in the foyer and made his way upstairs to his room; the thunking of his footsteps on the oaken floorboards echoing around the empty house.

Ben was about an average build for sixteen and a little bit gangly with his slight body and long limbs. He had an unruly mop of black hair that his father might tousle in a distracted absent mindedness in passing; always in passing, never with his undivided attention. He usually wore varying tones of black and grey with a shirt that had the insignia of his favourite metal band. He was quiet, reserved and shy, but also quite intelligent, although his relative staidness at times belied this hidden intellect. Ben was also a writer.

Alone all afternoon, he dismissed the ever growing pile of homework, and sat by the floor length window in his room with a battered, black notebook. He wrote his heart out.

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The Wolf

Shadows. Dappled light percolating through moving leaves. Shapes adumbrating and shifting across my vision. Pin pricks of light that spear through in between. Glowing gold with delicate veins stretched out beneath the translucency of their gilded surfaces.

Slowly I raise my body from the ground and stand on all fours. I look around with a thick fog cloaking any coherent thoughts that may try to rise. I wonder at how I came to be here. Only abhorrent visions of darkness and loathing are recalled. There is also an obstinate burning inside my gut that refuses to dissipate. I whine miserably to myself and then shrink away from the light.

The forest is metamorphosing around me into a dark, foreboding, sinister place. The trunks of tall, egotistical trees gleam stark and ghostly against the dank, darkening air of the falling dusk.

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The Boy

A knock on the door. He raised his head from the pillow groggily and moaned in response. Have to get up for school. Ben dragged himself from the double bed, left it unmade. He
walked across the hall to the bathroom, ran a hand through his unkempt hair and straightened the clothes that he had gone to bed in. The result wasn't great, but at least he was ready early. He grabbed his notebook from the desk in his room and hurried downstairs.

As he entered the kitchen he grabbed his satchel, which was now hanging on a chair because his mother liked to keep the floors clutter free in the entranceway.

"Breakfast, Ben?" She asked when she spotted him trying to scoot out the door in a hurry.

"No thanks, Abigail," he replied. He picked up an apple from the bowl of fruit in the middle of the kitchen table and held it up to her, gesturing that he would eat it on the way. Her response was a reproachful look that he barely took in as he rushed out the door.

Mornings always made Ben anxious. He needed to get to school early. He needed to be able to avoid the very people who...were now approaching.

They had smug looks, the three of them. They were all walking alongside each other, with Michael in the middle. He was by far the tallest, bulkiest guy for their year. His reputation for beating people up preceded him and his ego. He cracked his knuckles loudly and glanced at his friends on either side. They had dropped back and let him take the lead, jostling each other and braying with laughter.

As they neared, Ben dropped his gaze to the ground. It was littered with pine needles that softened your footfall. Tangles of roots spilled over each other and reached toward his feet as they grew outwards, presumably from the tree at right that he could see in his peripheral vision. His hands trembled slightly so he shoved them deep into his pockets. The shadow of the three fell across the ground he had been studying and he looked up warily.

"Thought we'd run into you today, Benny boy. You're up early today though, you wouldn't be trying to avoid our morning walks, would you?" Michael asked in mock surprise, sneering and raising his eyebrows at his friends.

"Never. They're my favourite part of the day," Ben replied in a sarcastic tone, immediately on the defence. His voice had wavered, he really hoped they hadn't heard his voice waver.

Michael stepped forward into Ben's face and made a guttural sound, "Sarcastic little shit." Then he pushed Ben backwards with unexpected force and made him fall heavily to the ground. The contents of his bag spilled across the dirt and he made desperate scramble to get to his feet again. Michael kicked him in the ribs half heartedly to keep him down and let his gaze drift towards the black notebook sitting half a metre away.

"This yours," He stated, rather than asked. His other two friends leapt on Ben to keep him down while Michael picked up the book. He flicked through its pages and then thrust it into the deep pocket of his coat. He walked over to the bag on the ground and tipped it upside down to empty it completely.

It happened quickly. One of the two friends cried out and pulled back as he felt the sharp bite of Bens teeth in their arm. The other was tripped up and landed face down in the dirt. Michael roared angrily and sped after his prey, dropping everything. The trees were a great cover and ben slipped away as easily as a shadow. When Michael realised that he couldn't catch him he returned to his friends and scavenged what he wanted from the belongings on the ground.

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The Wolf

A scent. Wispy and insubstantial. My natural aptitude for detecting threats is causing the degradation of my confidence. I know something is following me. Just beyond my vision, in the blurry unfocused background there is a figure. A petulant commination towards me. I am
not to be followed or hunted. I am better than any stupid prey. My capricious mood is turning to an absolute antipathy for my stalker.

Walking aimlessly through the forest. I regard my instincts and fervently rely on those only. Paranoia is making me twitchy and antagonistic. I stop and turn. My gut is absolutely broiling, conflagrant inside of me. My vision sweeps the environment before me. I hold my confronting stance as I wait. Unmurmurously silent, until a stirring in the undergrowth to my left. A figure cast in shadow emerges. I growl at it in disdain. It slowly, decisively raises something. It smells like gunpowder. I can smell the combination of charcoal, sulphur and saltpetre. I feel that I know what is approaching. I refuse to be supplanted.

I do not have the means or the advantage, so I dart away from its aim. I sprint through the trees, winding and turning to keep them away. I am too agile and quick, I know I am freed from the threat. I remain pensive however. I begin to realise that the burning inside is anger. A deep, overpowering anger. I have been the subject of a hunter.

As I trek up a sudden steep incline, heading for a better view, I envision the gory decapitation of the figure, and the rage inside me increases in copious amounts.

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The Boy

He was paranoid for the rest of the day. The walk through the tree plantation had been eerily quiet. By the time he had gotten to school, the bell had rung and he was at least an estimated half hour late to class.

He slipped into the room, largely unnoticed and took a seat. When he went to sit down his heart raced as he fell through air, not hitting anything solid until the crushing blow of the floor against his tailbone. Laughter erupted all around. He quickly jumped to his feet, eyes pricking with unseen tears, face burning red with the intense humiliation.

"Travis." A simple comment, an antagonistic look from the teacher and the chair was replaced and Ben seated. The remainder of the class went agonisingly slow. Things were thrown, whispers and snickers behind his back; all manner of disheartening things.

The day continued in the same way until the lunchtime break when he was confronted by a group of guys from his earlier class. They were quite good friends with Michael although they only saw him on weekends because of their different schools. It was evident that they shared the same moral standings as he did and they took pride in being the dominant "gang" of the school.

"Saw you took a tumble Benny," James said from his position behind Travis. Travis leered at Ben. They stayed there for a whole ten minutes taunting him about everything they could conjure up in their tiny closed minds, until he finally snapped and jumped from his position sitting on the bench. His fist landed a blow straight in Travis' face. Blood poured in a steady stream from his nose and he turned away for a moment, to face his friends. He spat a bloody salivary mess at their feet and the act of it really set the fight in motion.

Immediately James took the lead and was followed by the rest of the brood. Ben was held with his arms behind his back, leaving him vulnerable, while Travis turned back around and slammed his own vengeful fist into Ben's stomach.

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The Wolf

I observe a bleating lamb in the silence. The moon is prevalent in the night sky. I use my sharpened senses to descend from the ridge, still heading east, to the farmland. As i draw
nearer a whole flock comes into view. They graze silently now, with the bright moon shining silver on their wooly backs. I can hear them grinding the grass between their teeth, shuffling around each other sleepily, lambs suckling and settling down to a position of repose.

My heart rate skyrockets as i slowly emerge from the forest and slink through the long grass towards the fence line. It is a solid wooden fence; the sheep are fully enclosed and vulnerable. I lower myself onto my stomach and slide under it. Although I hardly make a sound I am spotted, for i am now in the open. The flock startles and the sheep run for their lives.

Instantly I unsheath my claws and leap onto the nearest beast. A small lamb struggles in agony beneath my paws as the full force of my body slams into it. I hear the crack as its ribs depress and immediately feel the hot steaming blood seeping out. I leave the lamb dying and carry on.

The next unfortunates are nearby and I froth madly at the mouth, leaping onto them and crushing the air from their feeble bodies beneath me. I rip out their throats and again leave them there bleeding out. I do not care for such small prey tonight.

With the conflagrant anger inside urging me forward I single out and chase down a full grown sheep. Propelling myself onto its back I rake its sides with my claws before it tumbles roughly to the ground. There is barely a struggle, since I am at least twice its size. I lock onto its neck and push my teeth into it slowly. I feel the life pounding through this creature, it gives me such a thrill.

The blood spurts from its jugular as I bury my whole snout in its neck. The hot metallic blood pours forth. I lap it up eagerly, behead the whole thing, and then move down onto the main part of its body. Steam rises from the carcass as I tear at the organs inside. I consume this creature with a vast emptiness still inside myself.

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The Boy

He runs home, bloodied and bruised. Rasping, panting breath; a deep agonising pain within. He has to stop several times to regroup his thoughts. The shouting of students and teachers from the schoolyard were enough to make him hurry. The tree plantation was a shortcut to his house, but it was very dense and solitary. Something clicked in Ben's mind. He wasn't going back home. He felt as though he was in purgatory, floating in wait. He silently slipped away through the trees, making a detour to find the most secluded place he could, and fumbled in his pocket for the cold metallic feel of a razor. A howling wind began to swell around the forest.

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The Wolf

I wander through the forest. It is late afternoon. I can smell fear. A specific fear. The figure is sitting on the ground, leaning with its back against a tree. I stalk up to it from behind. All of my muscles are wound tight, ready to spring. I roar at it, forcing the boy to face me. His face is pale and drawn, his movements weary. He stands and watches me. I growl and twitch agitatedly. He smiles. It seems an unnatural feature on his face with the sad eyes accompanying it. Suddenly he extends his arms towards me. In one fluid movement I pounce on him, accepting his welcoming gesture. The boy is no more. The wolf has won.

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