

Lone Wolf

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The man had been out since early dawn. He had woken before first light, taken his spears and headed out into the low hills to the north. He was unaware of the wolf watching him from the hills. Deer had been difficult to find for many days and other hunters from his tribe where scattered already, many had been on the hunt for a while.

He preferred to hunt alone. He always used spears and avoided the bow. He liked the challenge of creeping as close to the deer as possible, and use one spear to hurt the deer, then wear it down. Finally catch it bleeding and tired and finish it off with another spear. Usually he only had a need for two, but he always carried five on his hunting trek.

Wolves don't always hunt in packs, but they are skilled when it comes to coordinating a hunt of many when they find herds or other prey. They have innate ability to work together as one, often up to seven in a hunt. But they most often hunt alone or in pairs of two.

It is hard work to be a wolf in a pack. Females and males hunt equally, and they care for the litter as one. Bitch with puppies cares for her young and others in the pack bring food back for her. They take turns protecting, playing and cleaning up after the young ones. They teach the young where it is safe to travel and they take great care for their pack. Hunting alone, splitting themselves up, allows the pack to cover great distances in all directions, making it easier in hard times like these to find herds far off.

Early next morning, unknown to the man, a wolf travelling alone more than a day from the litter spotted him walking uphill. The wolf had often seen men, they lived in the hills and avoided the men. Men had a way of chasing them off with flying branches which made whooping sounds and sometimes had hurt or even killed some in his family.

The wolves in his pack didn't dislike the men. Men made interesting noises and they smelled nice. Their auras were different colours than the other animals made and easy to read. He particularly liked the men like this one which had a yellow aura, but this one had many legs protruding in front and from behind him.

He watched for a while. As was the way with his pack, they liked to watch the men. Not often did they venture close to their camps, as for how dangerous it was, but those who did often found a carcass or leftovers near the camps. His uncle liked to watch them hunt deer, he liked the leftover carcasses. He himself didn't like it, the flying branches were keen in his memory from long time ago. He had accompanied his uncle once or twice, but didn't really like it.

But this man was alone and there was something about him and he didn't see the short and sharp flying branches which the other men used. What were these longer ones? He watched, and made sure he was unseen by the man. He followed most of the day and watched, he had plenty of time. He had eaten the day before and felt inside that a day or two more without food would be alright. As he kept his distance and kept an eye out on the man and with a little anticipation and interest the long branches.

He knew that his fellow wolves were also interested in men. They never got tired of watching how they used their frontlegs to carry things and never needed to run on four. They just stood upright and walked around, sometimes faster but always dreadfully slow. Quite interesting. Never did the wolves consider to hunt a lone man, there's the pact between carnivorous hunters; We hunt grass eaters not one another. Except in famine, then it's every wolf for himself, every bear for himself and every fox for himself.

Late that evening the man found a deer herd, the wolf already knew about that herd, he had eaten from it the day before. He had carried food back home to the lair and thrown it up for the young

puppies of the first bitch. He could have already been here early this morning, but he was interested in the man with yellow aura and long branches. He liked him, but he wasn't going to be seen. You never know with men. They had killed wolfs without eating. Like if the liked to kill?

It is very intimate and personal to kill a beast. You have to run to the animal, and for the large and strong deer? The deer is smart and fast, it is very intentional to seek one out for the chase and to manouvre up to its side and snap your mouth deep into its neck. To hang on as it tries to outrun and shake you off, to feel its thundering heart in your sholder. To feel the sweet and warm taste of blood in your mouth, to feel the urge and desire to shake it asunder and kill it. It could take many instants, a long time. After it was dead it was part of you, and it was you. You can not do this without respect, it's part of your life and you a part of it. How can you kill like a man? Not to eat what you kill is impersonal, cold, disprespectful, without harmony.

A wolf never shows disrespect.

He watched the man hiding from the herd, saw him almost crawl. He watched closely how the man took his time and manouvred himself closer. He didn't do anything like the other men. Other men hunted together like he sometimes did with his best friend, a bitch from the year before him, and other wolfs. They tried to steer the herd together, circle it or drive it and single out three or four deer and kill them together as fast as possible.

This man almost crept to the herd in the same way he does himself when he hunts alone!

The herd felt something. Perhaps a smell? He doubted it, though he knew the Deer has keen sense of smell, but none like his. He had many times seen with his nose how the herd didn't smell some things he did. This man had odour quite well defined and distinct. He himself could easily see odour distinction between some of the men he had watched hunting. No, the herd couldn't find this odour not with the wind this way, they probably just felt danger as the got uneasy and began to shift and move.

This was fun! He had an idea as he saw the man take greater care. He didn't question the idea, just like the deer he trusted his instincts. He suddenly ran for the man and swiftly moved past him, he somehow knew that the man wouldn't risk the deer seeing him as he moved past, and wouldn't try to kill him with a long branch. He passed the man in safe distance, with his tail low, the man must understand that signal.

He was careful not to be too close, in order to show proper respect, and as soon as he approached the top of that hill he took a turn, crouched low and hid himself from the herd. Then slowly he encircled the herd, knowing that he had disappeared from the man. He took great care not to disturb the herd. What an idea! This was just like when he worked with the favorite friend. He made sure that every time the herd shifted that they'd get a whiff of him or even see him. This way he kept the herd close until the man had caught his kill.

The man took his time dissecting the animal, never knowing what became of the wolf which so suddenly had ran past him earlier. He liked the wolfs. He knew they rarely disturbed men and their camps. He himself when he was younger had often spent time watching the wolf's lair. He had enjoyed watching the puppies and admired the intricate relationships between the wolfs.

He made campfire, it was late already and he had now wish to travel back home in the night. He was quite looking forward for the campfire and spending the night under the stars. He made bedding from the skin, cooked meat by the fire and wrapped up the meat which he would carry in the morning. He wonderd what had made the wolf run like that just before his hunt, it was quite unusual. He reflected on how interesting the hunt was overall. He had observed how the herd had been useasy at first, but then kind of just stayed put. They had kept being uneasy but once he had thrown his first spear the herd had jumped into a run. Did he see the wolf just for a second at the moment the deer ran away? No probably not, anyway he had been too preoccupied with the animal

he was slaying.

He dozed off as the fire went out and woke up just before early light. As he prepared himself for the long trek home he noticed something very interesting. The leftover carcass he was leaving behind had been gnawed at in the night. There was no doubt that a wolf or fox had come in the night and gotten its fill. There were no bears in these lands, only foxes and wolves. Was it the wolf from yesterday?

He realized that it didn't disturb him to know that a wolf could have easily attacked him in the night. He wondered about this all day as he trekked back to the camp. He made sure to keep to the walk, as he would probably not reach home before dark. Being slower than the day before on account of the meat he carried. Twice during the day he saw a lone wolf but didn't really think about it.

He rested for two days, as was his custom, until another hunt. He always did that. Rest and reflection, camp work, have some personal fun with his woman, spend time with their children and others of the tribe. Then back, alone as usual, into the wild. Using his skill, and insight to challenge the prey. On his next hunting trip he spotted a wolf again, and again it was unusually easy to hunt. That time he had trekked for two days until he found the herd, and again as he had hunted and slept, some wolf or fox had eaten from his leftover carcass.

As the summer went by this repeated itself again and again. This was a difficult year for hunting and it didn't go unnoticed, in the tribe, that he had become more successful than other hunters. People were surprised, as he used such unconventional methods.

The wolf had loved this, this was fun, unusual. Since the first hunt he had followed the man back. Then he'd hidden and observed. Night came, day came, night came, day came and one more night, the man came back and went on another hunt. The same pattern repeated itself. The man walked with branches and the wolf followed his aura and odour, always at a distance. When the herd was found he helped unseen, he also made sure the man saw him just before the hunt and in the same way.

After the second hunt he took time to take food back to the litter. Then he kept observing the pleasant smelling man with the pretty aura. As the summer went by, two full moons passed. He didn't know how often he had followed and learnt. He just knew that he liked this new method of hunting, this new pattern. It was easy. It took four sleep sessions to catch one deer. Reliable and nice pattern, he liked it. He hunted now just as many deer as before. He had twice hunted for fun with his best friend and he'd always made sure to bring food back to the litter as usual.

One day when the man left his tribe he made sure that he'd see him early that morning. He didn't question his instinct, but he needed to know if the man was danger to him. He felt like they were hunting partners, he wanted to be closer, he wanted to know if he had fear from the deadly branches.

The man just looked at him but did nothing. Another moon went by. Every time when the man went on a hunting trek the wolf was ready. By now he knew how many sleep sessions he had between the man's trips. He had another idea!

That morning the man was obviously taking a longer route! The wolf already knew where the nearest herd was. He ran in front of the man and stood at safe distance. Ready to run if he'd hurl a branch his way. The man stopped and looked at him. The wolf made sure not to stare in his eyes, not to urge him for fight. Better to show respect but not obedience. He shifted his feet, wagged his tail as few times as possible and made great care to shift in the right direction.

The man looked for a while unmoving. Something in him stirred. Was this really the same wolf as he had seen so many times during the summer? Was this the wolf who had eaten from the

carcasses? Was he being friendly? He had the urge to shift in the same direction as the wolf, to turn in that direction and take one step. As he did the wolf sprinted forward and disappeared. Success! He had managed to show the man the right direction.

The man kept going until past noon, he caught a glimpse of the wolf again in that day. Once lying on a hill and watching him with his mouth open like smiling, with the tongue half out. Another time as he topped a hill he saw the wolf far off on the next hill. That time he found the herd easier than ever before. He couldn't believe it! The wolf had shown him how to find the herd.

The next two hunting treks went the same way. The wolf corrected his direction every time if he strayed from the path to the herd. The man could barely believe what was happening. He had a couple of times tried to tell his woman that a wolf had hunted with him for months, but she didn't believe him. His best friend in the tribe didn't exactly laugh but didn't say anything. Noone could believe that a wild and dangerous wolf was helping him to hunt deer.

As the year passed he got dependent on the wolf following and helping him. Every prey he caught he made sure the wolf would get his share. As time passed the wolf even came to pick from the carcass while the fire was still alive and the man awake. It was like a friendship was developing out of mutual trust from the hunt.

As winter passed he became the hunter the tribe respected and trusted, but he couldn't hunt with other men. When others came with him the wolf kept hidden and didn't appear. Men believed that since he was the most successful hunter they would be successful as well if they came with him. But it wasn't so. Of course they caught prey if there were more of them, but they always took longer to find the herd and noone believed him that a wolf was helping him. They only laughed at him.

He never had liked to hunt with others, he liked solitude and the challenge of hunting alone. Those few times his tribesmen went with him were soon over. That winter his was the family which never went hungry. A few times he took time off for a couple of days to try to find the wolf's lair. Everyone knew more or less where the wolf's lived. They kept new lair every year but through the last twenty years or so they had been known to rotate between around four or five places for their lairs. He took days between hunts to try to find them. He had noticed through the months that the wolf was always there on the third day after he came back from a hunt. Like he had realized the pattern.

Late that winter he found the lair and since then made sure to observe it from a safe distance. His tribe had long since learnt to respect the wolf-tribe in the hills. Indeed they didn't like the wolves, but they respected them and now there wasn't a real danger from them. The wolves didn't attack the humans and lone humans had often encountered them in the wild. Sometimes they had killed a lone wolf or two but only if they were too close to the tribe or interfered with the hunt.

The man took great care, though he knew that the wolves wouldn't hunt him, he knew he should keep his distance in order not to disturb. As another year went by he came to know the differences between some of the wolves and he could always detect "his" wolf from a distance. The winter passed and summer came and went. Another winter passed and his wolf was obviously middle aged. They hunted together and sometimes the lone wolf even ran or walked quite close to him. Many in his tribe had come to accept that he was hunting with a wild wolf, hard as it was to believe. Eccentric as they'd always known him, they respected that he never came back empty handed from a hunting trek, in fact he caught two preys every week. Like clockwork. He was wealthy, his family never starved and he was generous to others.

The third summer an extraordinary thing happened. The wolf had a yearling with him on one of the trips. This was unexpected, to see the middle aged experienced wolf hunting with a younger one. Was it a son or a daughter? Was it a sister or a brother? Why did he have one puppy and not two? There were little known about the tribe of the wolves especially to how they hunted. Yes he had many

times gone a days trip out into the wild to observe the lairs from a distance but he couldn't easily tell them apart.

He came quickly to accept and expect the young wolf following his old hunting partner. As the summer went by, trip by trip, the yearling came quite close to him from time to time, obviously curious. He realized later that summer that it was a young bitch and he called her Kela and the old one Whuli. He didn't really consider choosing names for the wolfs, they just came to his mind one night and he began using them. He never chose to hunt with the wolf, the wolf had chosen him.

As summer approached autumn, Kela had come all the way to him quite a few times at the campfire. She had often snuggled close to him, not touching but close, in the early night. Somehow it just came naturally on one hunting trip in autumn that Kela followed him all the way home, and stayed outside his hut until next trip.

Since then twelve thousand years have passed for us.

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