

The Lamb Who Ate The Wolf

I

One day a young lamb was drinking from the river known as Providence. This is a river that has divided two worlds for as long as any lamb can remember: the world of wolves and the world of lambs.

Any lamb that has been prey to a wolf has fallen prey first to the tumultuous rivers of Providence. The fear of both the river and the wolf is passed down through the blood of every lamb. Thus, every generation is born with fear imbedded into who they are of these things.

As the young lamb drank from the river of Providence who pondered over the things he was born already knowing. He knew not to get too close to the river. For if he fell in his life would be over because no lamb has ever survived falling into the river.

There is a legend, however, of his young lamb's father. The legend says that his father was the only lamb as far back as anyone can recount who fell into the river and survived. According to this legend his father fell into the river and washed up onto the other side onto the shores of the world of wolves. So, he didn't die in the river of Providence.

But he never returned to the world of lambs. It was assumed that the inevitable occurred--that he was consumed by the wolves. No lamb really knows the true fate of the young lamb's father. They only know that he never returned to the world of the lambs.

As the young lamb drank from the river of Providence he reflected on his father's legend. His own reflection from the river's waters, in the midst of his mind's wanderings, caught his attention as he thought of his father. He wondered to himself what his father was like. He wondered to himself if he looked just like his father.

As he fell deeper into thought he eased closer to the face of the waters of the river to get a better look at himself.

And without warning he slipped...

Time has no place below the surface of the river of Providence. So the young lamb had no idea where he was or what was happening to him. All that he knew was that his world had changed; that the world he was just in was not the world he now found himself within.

Eventually there were no more thoughts and there was no more light. All sound, colors and feelings of life had faded into the darkness.

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II

When the young lamb awoke he couldn't tell if he were waking up dead or alive because he didn't know what it felt like to be dead. He only knew of what it was like to be alive.

He thought about this for a while, the difference between what it felt like to be alive or to be dead. And while thinking about this mystery he realized there was one thing that was similar to being alive, if he was dead, and it was that his mind still worked in the same way that it did when he was alive. And that gave him comfort. Having something that reminded him of what he once knew gave him comfort in the midst of world that he didn't know.

The young lamb decided that his mind alone couldn't help him determine whether or not he was alive. So he decided to call upon his other senses to help solve the mystery that was now his life.

First, he called upon his sense of **touch** to feel the world around him. When he tried to move his legs to get up and walk around he was met with a great deal of pain. He twisted his neck towards his hind legs and could see a great wound. Seeing this told him at least one thing: that he must still be alive because he didn't see a need for the feeling of pain or bleeding when one is dead.

What he still couldn't quite understand was how he got the wound. He asked himself, 'Did the wound occur when I was in the river of Providence? And why are only my hind legs wounded and no other part of my body?'

Being unable to move the young lamb decided to use his sense of **sight** to see if he could uncover the mystery of where he now found himself. He knew that if he was alive there were only two places he could be: in the world of the lambs or . . . in the world of the wolves.

He looked first to his right and saw tall, thick trees that formed a forest similar to a forest back home. But, unlike the forest of his home, the trees of this place formed a forest whose empty spaces were filled with a darkness that consumed all light. He tried to penetrate the darkness with his eyes in hopes of finding some sense of home, but was met with a sinking feeling of hopelessness. He was looking for something that he wouldn't be able to find, at least not by sight.

He then looked to his left and found himself looking into the face of what he instantly knew must be death. He had never seen death before but he recognized lifelessness as soon as he saw it. To his left were a large pile of lambs skulls stacked and looking in his direction as he lay there on the ground looking in theirs. Another truth had been revealed to him: that he was not in the world of the lambs anymore.

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III

This was a frightening sight for the young lamb because this not only confirmed that he was still alive, but introduced him to the idea that he could still die. His mind began to race with the thought of death; and it began to fill with fear.

And as his whole being began to fill with the substance of fear he **heard** a noise behind a bush that was not far off from where he lay. Upon turning his head in the direction of the bush the scent of sage was blown into his nose. The smell was strong and it was enlivening; it was a smell that reminded him of home and it made him miss it. Thoughts of leaving this place of darkness and death began to flood the fear that was filling up his existence, but those thoughts were short lived. For, what emerged from the bush led him to believe that there was no chance of him going home; that his life would soon come to an end.

For the first time the young lamb saw what had to be a wolf. The stories that were told about wolves were stories based on myths not facts. No lamb had ever seen a wolf and lived to tell about it. So, what the young lamb knew about wolves was what his imagination created for him based on the stories he and all lambs have been told for as long as anyone can remember. The truth was he didn't know what was true and what was lie. He now found himself in the position of finding out if all that he had ever been told, if the stories, were really true.

As the wolf emerged from the bush the young lamb noticed how the wolf's fur was as black as the night sky. There were no lights in the night sky of his fur. To stare at the body of the wolf was like looking into an abyss.

He moved slowly as if stalking the young lamb even though the lamb couldn't move. He moved in a way that almost evoked a sense of uncertainty, maybe even anxiousness, but that must be an illusion, thought the young lamb.

As the wolf got closer the lamb could feel his heart beat harder against his chest, like it was trying to break free from the prison bars of his rib cage. When the wolf was finally at the feet of the young lamb he snapped his neck towards the young lamb's hind legs. The young lamb closed his eyes as he winched anticipating the pain of the wolf's sharp teeth as it penetrated his skin and bone. But the pain didn't come.

After few moments the lamb summoned the courage to open his eyes only to find that the wolf was no longer standing at his feet, towering over his limp body. Instead, the lamb found the wolf lying on his stomach at the base of the pile of lamb's skulls. He was gnawing away at a half-eaten skull.

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The lamb fearfully watched the wolf while he tore skin off the bone of the skull. Eventually the wolf took his attention off his current meal to examine his prospective upcoming meal. Upon catching the young lamb staring in his direction the wolf made his gaze a penetrating look into the lamb's eyes. The wolf expected the lamb to look away once their eyes met, but the young lamb did not look away. Instead the lamb observed the wolf with a great deal of curiosity; this intrigued the wolf and compelled him to speak to the lamb before killing him.

The words the wolf first spoke formed a question that delved into the inner workings of the young lamb's mind, "*What do you see when you look at me?*"

The lamb stared so intently at the wolf because he recognized in the wolf something he felt within himself. He was surprised that his fear of the wolf resided with the idea of the wolf not the reality that now stood before him. He still feared the wolf because the wolf was still a mystery to him. However, the fear diminished the longer he lived and the more he could study the wolf's existence. Within the young lamb's mind a new story about the wolf was being born without his own knowing. The lamb stared at the without hesitation because the fear of the wolf he was born with was now dying, giving birth to a new generation of lamb.

The wolf awaited the young lamb's response only to be met with silence. He assumed that the young lamb said not a word because he was frozen with fear. The wolf was unaware that the lamb was stunned not by his fear but rather, by his lack thereof.

No longer willing to reside in silence with the young lamb, the wolf picked up the half-eaten skull and carried it over to the young lamb in his mouth. Standing on all fours before the young lamb the wolf dropped the skull at the feet of the young lamb so that he could get a closer look. "*Do you recognize the skull that sits at your feet?*" asked the wolf.

The young lamb shook his head. "*It's the face of your father,*" said the wolf.

The lamb took a closer look at the part of the skull that still had a face. He recognized the remainder of the face as his own. It was the face of his father. It was not the dead, half-eaten skull of his father.

The young lamb **listened** intently as the wolf continued to speak. "*You are what your father once was; and he is what you will soon become. And there's nothing you can do to change this. This is how it has always been. This is how it will always be. Wolves have always eaten lambs. You were born to my next meal. You were born only to die.*"

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As the wolf spoke these words the lamb felt a burning within that he had never known before this moment. The pain from the wounds on his hind legs faded as this internal fire grew. He didn't feel like a lamb anymore.

The wolf, believing he had paralyzed the young lamb with fear, turned his back to walk away when the young lamb did something no other lamb had done before—he stood up while in the presence of a wolf. Even though the wolf's back was to the young lamb he had felt a shift in the air around him. He turned back around to find the lamb again looking back into his eyes only this time they were standing face to face.

The wolf was so surprised to be standing face to face with a lamb that he jumped back. The wolf's startled movements made the young lamb react in the same way. He also jumped back mimicking the wolf's movement.

The young lamb continued to follow the wolf's lead. Everything he did the lamb would duplicate. The way the young lamb was being unnerved the wolf. Everything the young lamb was doing, being an exact reflection of the wolf's own movements, made the wolf uneasy. He had seen in a lamb what a lamb's saw in him. He had never faced himself before. He had never known what fear looked like because he had never felt it--until now.

The wolf began to feel smaller as the young lamb shadowed the wolf. He desperately sought after a moment in which he could frighten the lamb into the being small so that he can feel big again. He began to move in a circular motion in the direction of the young lamb never taking his eyes off of him. The lamb followed the wolf's lead moving in a circular motion away from the wolf.

And as the wolf circled with the young lamb, locking eyes and never looking away, he waited for a moment when he could attack the young lamb. He wanted to do this as quickly as he could because he felt as though he was losing the essence of who he had always been.

As the wolf stared into the light of the young lamb's dark eyes he could not see himself. *He could not tell the difference between himself and the young lamb. He could not tell if he was the wolf or if he was the lamb.* He was being consumed by the courage of the young lamb.

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IV

The young lamb studied the wolf's every move doing exactly as he did. He was unaware of how his actions were affecting the wolf. All he knew with certainty was everything he was doing was keeping him alive. And as they danced in circles the young lamb would feel his heart skip a beat every time he found himself facing *the other side of the river*. He wanted to live. He was ready to go home.

With these new thoughts, thoughts of living, not dying, rushing through his mind and powered by the thunderous beating of his heart, the young lamb awaited his own moment to attack the wolf. He was desperate to jump back into the waters of Providence and risk death on his own terms if it meant he had a chance at staying alive. He would not accept the fate of his ancestors. He would not accept the fate of his father.

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V

When the wolf lunged at the young lamb's neck the young lamb did not cower in fear. Instead, the young lamb continued his tactic of mimicking the wolf and too lunged towards his adversary. And as he lunged towards the wolf he opened his mouth and prepared to bite down upon any part of the body his teeth could find.

As fate would have it the young lamb's teeth made contact with the left ear of the wolf. The sensation of being bitten brought the wolf down to the floor of the earth, creating an open path for the young lamb to run towards the river. And as he neared the river's banks, he took a deep breath and then leapt back into the river.

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VI

Once again the young lamb found himself in the arms of darkness and yet, he did not feel lost or alone as he once did before. This time he did not resist the flow of the river. He allowed the rivers water to wash over him hoping they would lead him to a place that would be a final destination he would be grateful to call home.

And as these thoughts flowed through his mind, his thoughts and the light eventually became no more. All sound, colors and feelings of life had faded into the darkness.

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VII

This time when the young lamb awoke he knew that he was alive because he was surrounded by the light of the white coats of his fellow lambs. His eyes filled with waters mixed of the sea salt that flowed from the banks of his oceans eyes as well as those from Providence.

Although he knew he was amongst those who were just like him, the other lambs stared at the young lamb as if he were not a lamb at all. They looked at him as if he were the realization of the myths they had told amongst themselves for generation. They looked at him as if he were—a wolf. And in many ways they were right. He was no longer *just* a lamb, at least not an ordinary lamb.

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VIII

As time passed and the young lamb grew older he told the others of what he discovered while in the world of wolves. He told them of the wolf's cavernous black eyes. He described in detail how the light of every star in the night sky could not be seen if placed in the abyss of the wolf's fur coat.

He told of how he danced in circles with a wolf. And how, as they danced he began to see himself in the wolf because he was being just like the wolf. In many ways, he was becoming a wolf because he was no longer acting like a lamb. He was preying upon the wolf by no longer living as prey for the wolf. He discovered what courage looked like because he could see it being reflected back into his own soul as he unwaveringly stared into the eyes of the wolf.

He would end every telling of his story with the recounting of the last moments before he jumped back into the river known as Providence. He spoke of the moment when he and the wolf lunged at one another and how for a moment, the wolf became the lamb and the lamb became the wolf. The two worlds had exchanged places, and the order of things had switched for but a moment.

The world of the lambs and the world of the wolves were restored, he told them, the moment he **tasted** the blood of the wolf. The taste of his enemy's blood had awoken within him a reminder that he was not a wolf but a lamb. To have tasted the wolf's blood had solidified in him of one thing he would always be certain: that he never wanted to be like a wolf, full of fear and lacking in love.

The lamb told the others that when he bit the wolf's ear he immediately knew that he did not want to be a wolf. He didn't want to be fearful. He only wanted to overcome the false tale that consumed every lamb before it's even born. He fought back only to jump into the great unknown of the river because to have lied down and died without a fight would have solidified in him a lie as a truth.

Thus, without fear clouding the sight of his heart he could clearly see the world around him for what it was. He saw the wolf as his counterpart, not a creature to be feared. The lamb said he discovered within him something all lambs were led to believe didn't exist within themselves: the will to survive. He told the others that every lamb before them had the will to survive, but didn't know it because they never bothered to look within to find it.

Every lamb listened to the tales of the lamb and knew that the reality of his existence was now the new legend that would be passed on to generations to come. This lamb would forever be known as *the lamb who ate the wolf*.