

# The Wolf and the Ram

*a child's fable*

by Clay Rooks

The incident had become a legend in the forest. The tale had been told and retold for centuries. Every animal in the forest knew the story by heart and never missed a chance to tell it again. The owl knew the story best and all babes of the forest would listen with awe every spring when he told the tale. The first warm day they would gather beneath the giant oak tree in the center of the forest and wait for the owl to speak. Soon he would blink his huge round eyes and begin.

“Well it happened not more that a mile from this very spot,” he spoke. “It took place on the cliff that drops straight into the river. The wolf had been out hunting when he ventured up the cliff to look over the forest. As he was gazing across the meadow and timber the ram noticed him.

‘Wolf,’ he said, ‘what are you doing up here?’

‘I am looking for food,’ the wolf retorted.

‘Food,’ the ram said, ‘what do you think you are standing on?’

The wolf looked down and sneered. ‘You call this grass food?’ he said.

‘Of course it’s food,’ the ram replied.

‘Well I don’t eat grass,’ the wolf said looking over the meadow below.

‘What do you eat?’ the ram asked.

‘I eat flesh,’ the wolf said.

‘My God,’ the ram gasped, ‘you are certainly evil.’

‘How do you expect me to get nourishment from grass?’ the wolf asked.

‘Well I do,’ the ram said.

‘Well I don’t,’ the wolf said.

'Eating other animals is evil,' the ram said.

'What's wrong with that?' the wolf asked.

'Evil is bad and wrong,' the ram said. 'It is evil to kill.'

'Well if I want to live I must kill,' the wolf said.

'Are you saying evil is better than good?' the ram asked.

'If I want to survive I must kill to eat,' the wolf replied.

'How can you believe such a terrible thing?' the ram asked.

'If you are to survive you must be a little evil,' the wolf said.

'That is not so,' the ram said. 'I am not evil and I survive well.'

'You can not survive for long if you are always good,' said the wolf.

Their voices had risen to shouts and the animals of the forest had gathered to see what all the noise was about. They sat on the bank of the river looking across to the top of the cliff. The rabbits and squirrels sat in groups to watch the spectacle. The other larger animals were scattered about in two's and three's to watch.

'The good will survive longer than the evil,' boomed the ram.

'Yes, he's right,' all the animals whispered.

'No they won't,' growled the wolf. 'They will all be killed by those who wish to survive!'

'You are wrong!' bellowed the ram. 'Good will triumph over you evil!'

'You are a fool!' gnashed the wolf.

'How dare you call me a fool!' bellowed the ram. 'You are the evil fool!'

'If you weren't so dumb you would know the evil survive,' growled the wolf.

'Don't call me dumb!' The ram was enraged.

'Evil will outlast the good,' the wolf said. 'But you are too stupid to understand!'

'Stupid, am I!' the ram bellowed. He lowered his head and butted the wolf over the cliff.

'My goodness,' gasped the deer.

'See that proves it,' the fox said. 'Good is best.'

The ram tossed his head, snorted, and walked away.

“Well that’s the story,” the owl said yawning. “Good is better than evil.”

The little animals were all staring aghast. They sat for a minute, then they began to move silently away.

“Boy, the owl sure is wise,” said the racoon. “Good is best.”

\* \* \*

Copyright 1970 by Clay Rooks  
Originally published in *Sketch*, Fall 1970.