

The Wolf of Mind's Eye

ACT I: Nativitas

(The Shepherd in a pasture stands above a flock of sheep, the wolf stands among them, his location unknowable. The Wolf speaks to the Shepherd on the wind, though his location amidst the flock remains impossible to discern.)

SHEEP: The Sheep are not sheep, and there is no flock.

WOLF: I, the wolf, am likewise not a wolf.

SHEPHERD: I, the Shepherd, am no shepherd at all and cannot lead myself nor the flock of supposed sheep that attempt to follow me. My staff is but a hollow notion gesturing towards oblivion, never to command, a gesture without purpose.

WOLF: I wear the clothing of a sheep, yet I do not hunt for them. I do not wish to kill them. They know I am among them, and it brings them fear, stress, and, most of all, hate. I do not know why, but I know that they fear me and scorn me and wish me dead, so I shall continue to terrify them, for they bring it upon themselves as sheep, and it is my role as wolf to do so.

SHEEP: The wolf is somewhere in space, somewhere in nowhere, yet we, the sheep, cannot find him. We cannot ask the shepherd to thin him from our herd.

SHEPHERD: I, unfortunately, cannot see the wolf, nor can I see the sheep, nor do I possess any control over a single thing. I, the shepherd, can only watch helplessly as things I do not see move in a manner that I cannot comprehend.

WOLF: Pathetic, helpless sheep, why do you fear me? Why do you give me the name wolf when I am nothing to be feared? I have no teeth to rend thy flesh; I have no stomach to fill with your mangled gore. I am, in essence, no different from you. See, I even wear the appearance of a sheep. I am nothing to fear.

SHEEP: Do not mince words, vile wolf. You lie as you wish in an attempt to devour us! You masquerade in our flock in a vile attempt at deceit, and one of these days, one of these fine days, the shepherds will root you out and slaughter you. He will slaughter you mercilessly, and when he does, we will sleep soundly and beautifully, uninterrupted by a creature as vile as you.

(Somewhere in the field, the Wolf grins hatefully under its disguise)

WOLF: You speak of the greatness of the shepherd. Do you think the shepherd is capable of removing me from the fold, of slaying me, of saving the helpless sheep before me? Just tell me, feeble Sheep, how deep are the depths of thy foolishness? How pitiful art thou to think such a

runt capable of harming me? You and everyone in that thing you call a herd are so lewdly, brazenly stupid, I might as well slaughter you now and do you a favor.

(The Shepherd interjects, yelling into the air to ensure the wolf hears it, regardless of its location amongst the sheep)

SHEPHERD: It is true. I cannot lead the sheep, let alone protect them, though they do not hear me when I tell them. The wolf is the only one who can hear. No matter what I say or how I phrase it, the sheep never lose faith. They never cease acting like my declaration of failure is a proclamation of victory. I am sickened with myself.

SHEEP: See how the shepherd speaks. See the stature with which he conducts himself. He waits and appears too weak to wait until the optimal moment to strike, and when he does, you will die, vile wolf. You wish to kill us, you wish to devour us, you wish to leave nothing left in your wake. The disguise has slipped away, and you have revealed yourself to be savage and disgusting. In time, Wolf, you will die.

(A series of bleats emanate from the flock, all ones of affirmation and faith)

SHEPHERD: Wolf, I know you see it, my loss of faith, my abyss of inaction. You wish to leave me alone; you wish to slaughter the sheep which I care so much about, but yet am unable to bring myself to save. You exist to plunge me deeper.

WOLF: I will not masquerade as a wolf for you, dear shepherd, for you are too foolish to tell the difference regardless. Foolish shepherd, do you believe me to exist for you? I could not exist for someone so unimportant, so vile, so detestable.

SHEPHERD: So what then, what do you exist for, dear wolf?

WOLF: I exist to be hungry, just as the sheep exist to be afraid, and you exist to be helpless.

SHEPHERD: And what of it? What purpose does your hunger serve? To what end will you feast? To what end will the sheep fear? And to what end will my helplessness extend?

WOLF: Your questions irritate, vile shepherd. I do not care for them. I believe I will answer none of them, and I will don the mask of the sheep once more to disappear from you and perhaps to feast.

SHEPHERD: To feast? I have never once heard you use the word feast. Just what do you intend to do, dear wolf?

(The Shepherd is given no response, yet regardless, almost as if the wolf spoke to him through the wind, he knows that the wolf intends to feast upon the sheep and destroy him as a result)

ACT II: Transitorium

(A cacophony of sheep baa and bleat repetitively)

SHEPHERD: Just what does that wolf intend to do? How does he intend to destroy me? I never asked for such a burden. Matter of fact, I've never asked for anything at all. I have never asked for anything other than the life of my sheep, and no matter how I beg, that wolf is intent on devouring them and leaving me alone. I do not have the heart of a shepherd. As a matter of fact, I know not if I have a heart at all. If I were to have a heart... it would likely be the heart of a coward.

SHEEP: Look! The Shepherd muses to himself! Truly, our leader is a genius poet!

SHEEP: He will protect us from harm! He will liberate us from evil! He will-

(The sheep is interrupted by a swift hissing through the air, and in a second, is gone)

SHEPHERD: Wha-!?

SHEEP: The wolf is upon us! Hide behind the Shepherd!

SHEPHERD: No... No! Don't hide behind me. I can do nothing to protect you from harm. I cannot save you!

SHEEP: The Shepherd speaks of-

(A swift hiss through the air, a deafening crunch, the sheep is gone)

SHEPHERD: N-N- No!

(The Shepherd stumbles backwards)

WOLF: You kill the sheep! You slaughter them in your inaction, in your ignorance!

SHEPHERD: It is you who do this! You kill them! You kill them remorselessly! How could you ever live with yourself, dear Wolf?! How could you so remorsefully behave as the judge, jury, and executioner for a crowd of innocents?!

WOLF: Only a killer could rant about the murders of others with such ferocity.

(The Shepherd fell silent before clutching his staff tightly, his eyes staring down in a mix of rage and mourning)

SHEPHERD: Oh, Dear Wolf, thy cruelty knows no bounds. How I detest you, how I lament you, how I wish you harm. Yet this cane cannot possibly fall upon you, for I cannot kill you without being certain that harm will not come upon a sheep by my hand. Oh, Dear Wolf, when the day comes that you have taken everything from me, then and only then will I shatter every bone in

thy body, and my wrath made manifest will rend flesh and paint these fields a bloody pigment befitting of my rage.

(The wolf is silent now, and though it is impossible to tell where, somewhere among the sheep, the sound of teeth grinding in rage rises in the air)

ACT III: Ruinae

(The sheep are fewer in number now, there is less noise of sheep and the wind is iswhistlingg sharply through the air)

SHEEP: The Shepherd works hard to eliminate the wolf; he toils away day and night to protect us, and he will do so even if it destroys him!

SHEEP: The Shepherd is our savior! He will protect us from harm! And with his mighty and awe-inspiring staff befitting of someone as noble as him, he will kill the wolf!

(The Shepherd, hearing this, glances towards his staff sadly, then stands up solemnly.)

SHEPHERD: I wish you could understand me. I wish you could leave and never return, not because I hate you, my beloved sheep, but because I do not wish for any of you to meet the jaws of that wolf.

(The Wolf speaks on the winds again, his position impossible to discern)

WOLF: I would follow them if you sent them away, not that the pathetic weaklings would leave you, their mighty Shepherd, their great Shepherd

SHEPHERD: Why? Why kill them if you need not eat, nor for the sake of my suffering?

WOLF: Quite the fool you are. I would follow them to bring you despair, regardless. You can send them so far away as to never see them again, but regardless, you will spend every night wondering if somewhere, on some distant pasture, I have made a sanguine painting of your beloved sheep.

SHEPHERD: I-

WOLF: You hate me?

(The Shepherd falls silent, and, somewhere on the field, silently, blood is spilled)

WOLF: Why do you think I prolong the inevitable? Why do you think that I wait day in and day out instead of slaughtering every sheep in this field within a fragment of a single instant?

SHEPHERD: Because you are incapable? Because you are weak? Because you are nothing but a sad, starved animal seeking to ring out the last drops of despair from a maw that you have broken?

(The words of the Shepherd snap upon the air like shots from a gun, and his rage boils over)

SHEPHERD: Truthfully, I believe you to be pathetic beyond compare, O' Scornful, detestable, hideous Wolf. You hide yourself, for you fear my wrath. You fear the weight of my stick and how it will fracture your bones. You fear the split nerves and obliterated limbs you will face at my wrath! See how the Sheep speak of me! See how their words will be proven as if they prophesy. I am as strong as they say! Continue to hide! O' vile wolf, and soon, when I find you, when I discover your weakness, you will be slain!

(The Shepherd had his gaze fixed to the sky for the entirety of his rant, firmly to the sky, yet upon looking down, he found the field to be covered in a crimson blanket: Blood, innards, intestine, heart, lungs, and liver; all manner of sheep were strewn across the field methodically, in its wake, two sheep stand unharmed)

WOLF: Wrong answer, Shepherd

(The field is silent, not a single sound; the Shepherd stands shellshocked, and a sheep approaches him)

SHEEP: The answer, the reason why I prolong the inevitable, is to bring to you even greater despair.

(The sheep's words whispered their way into Shepherd's ear; and, upon hearing them from what appeared to be a sheep, his grief transformed into a rage as he lunges into the air, staff slamming at a speed it had never felt in its life, it whistled upon the air and struck the sheep on the broad side of its head, eviscerating it)

SHEPHERD: I'll kill you! You vile, disgusting blemish on this earth, you wolf, you creature of hate, I'll drain the life from you and drag what remains to the end of the world! I'll decimate you! I'll do it all for my flock! For my sheep! For my sheep, which you killed for nothing! I'll make you feel all the pain you've brought me! No! I'll make you feel worse! You have to feel it all worse. You have to feel the hate, the sleepless nights, the torture of it all! You have to suffer, you must suffer tenfold what you have brought to me! I'll rupture every last bone in your body! I'll slam you with this staff until my strength fails, and you are reduced to nothing but a bloody mist left to float away in the air! I'll remove you from this earth, from this plane of existence! Never to be seen again! I'll do whatever it takes to bring you pain, you carrion-stinking, soul-festering, filth-born Wolf!

(The Shepherd had been battering the Wolf with his staff during his entire speech, and he was thoroughly exhausted. He laughs in the ecstasy of his rage before peering down manically at his

work, at his magnum opus cordis of hate, the mass of flesh left in his wake spoke to him quietly, painfully, each word filled with vehement hatred and betrayal.

WHAT REMAINS OF A SHEEP: We... We trusted you to protect us.

(The creature that the Shepherd had battered to a pulp, reduced to miscellaneous chunks of meat, was no wolf at all. It was, instead, an innocent sheep who had just witnessed the death of his flock, now dying at the hands of a gambling shepherd whom he believed in and loved above all else. The sheep feels as if it could cry, yet it can't tell its eyes from its stomach, and so it simply dies. The Shepherd stands up in shock and sees before him a single remaining sheep, the Wolf.)

WOLF: Do you still think me weak? Pathetic? What was it? O' Shepherd of nothingness? What was it you thought me to be? What exactly did you believe me capable of? Are you in control? How pitiful that a Shepherd would be led to delusions of might by his sheep. Do you have any response for me? Do you wish to kill me? Are you really capable of raising that staff once again?

SHEPHERD: I cannot kill you, for you wear the skin of a sheep, and I could never hurt one of my own, never, I could never do such a thing. I could not live with myself if I did.

(The Shepherd's words echo lightly and dance upon the air, almost imperceptibly quiet; the Wolf has broken him)

WOLF: Very well then, O' great Shepherd, O' excellent Shepherd, O' peerless Shepherd. I will leave you to your flock, to your delusions of honor and heroism. As you can see, there is nothing left here for me.

SHEPHERD: Just like that? Do you intend to leave me just like that? Did it all mean nothing? Did all of this matter so little to you that you could simply leave me? Just kill me, kill me as you killed the sheep, I beg of you, you have bested me, wolf, so please, kill me.

WOLF: Kill you? I cannot possibly kill you. You are the Shepherd; you are powerful beyond compare. I couldn't kill you. It is my job to kill the sheep and your job to protect them, and now, the sheep are gone, and I have no choice but to leave, for there is nothing left for me to accomplish.

(The Shepherd has no words for the Wolf)

WOLF: I think, had you looked closely, you would've realized that my disguise was never so flawless after all. Try looking a little closer next time instead of keeping those human eyes of yours fixed on the ground, where there is nothing to be seen. That was your mistake. You thought me better than you in every manner from the beginning, despite the fact that such was never the case.

SHEPHERD: I don't want there to be a next time.

WOLF: Yet there will be one regardless. You don't have a choice in such matters, pitiful pawn of a Shepherd.

(The wolf walks away from the Shepherd, leaving him alone amidst the remains of his beloved sheep. What he meant by "next time" isn't clear, but just as the wolf spoke on the wind words that he knew to be true, he knows that there will be a next time, regardless of his actions or choices.