





The Shepherd and the Wolf

by Nelis Daniels

Long ago, an old shepherd and his wife lived in a small village next to a very large forest. The shepherd's name was Mongameli Abu, but the village's children simply referred to him as Mister MA or MA. Not "mahh", as you would sometimes call your mother, but "em ay". His wife was called Arivukile Abu, but MA just called her Ari. MA loved three things passionately: his wife, his carrots and his sheep. The rest didn't bother him much, and he was not easily angered by anything or anyone. MA followed his daily routine loyally: waking up at 05:30 and bringing Ari breakfast in bed at 06:00 - three hard-boiled eggs and a slice of toast. After breakfast, he would greet every one of his 100 woolly sheep, water his carrots, nap in the afternoon, and then have dinner with his wife at 19:30. He minded his own business and lived a quiet, peaceful life. However, one thing drove him completely crazy. He would swell up with rage when he thought about it, and sometimes, on days when he was particularly mad, you could even see grey wisps of smoke coming out of his old hairy ears. MA's arch-nemesis, his weakness, the thing he hated the most on earth, was a big grey wolf that lived in the forest.

The wolf was so big and bad that the villagers named it Arma. Just saying the wolf's name sent shudders of fear through even the bravest villagers. The wolf was named Arma because someone in the village once swore he had seen the wolf rip a man's arm clean off! The man shouted, "My arm! Ahhhh!" From that day, everyone knew about Arma, the wolf. He was elusive and sneaky, and his favourite snack in the world was, you guessed it, a delicious, meaty sheep.

Now, on a day like any other, MA woke up at 05:30, brought Ari breakfast at 06:00 and went out to greet his sheep. He greeted every sheep: number 1, 2, 3, ... 98, 99 ... but wait! Where was number 100? He counted again to make sure, but it was clear: number 100 was missing. The smoke started to swirl from his ears. It could be no one but Arma, the wolf.

Fuming, he vowed that the wolf would never take another sheep. He spent the rest of that day building a stone wall around his sheep's shed. The wall was two metres high and two bricks wide. He went to sleep that night, planning to rescue sheep number 100.

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The next day, MA rushed through Ari's breakfast to get to his sheep faster and even boiled one egg significantly softer than usual. She noticed immediately, and seeing her beloved shepherd so distracted broke her heart - all because of the bad wolf. She loved his calm nature and couldn't bear to see him so upset. MA counted his sheep carefully and almost exploded when he stopped at 97! Not again! His wise old head seemed lost in a grey cloud of smoke.



He had never been angrier in his entire life. Ari saw his rage and decided to help him get rid of this bad wolf once and for all. She realised that brick walls would not help; they would need to attack! She told MA that she had to visit her sister in a neighbouring village, but she drove their small car to the airport just over the hill. She flew over the mountains and the sea until she landed in dusty South Africa on a mission to find a weapon to defeat Arma, the wolf.

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Three days later, MA was still fuming. He had set up cameras around the sheep's shed and even bought a camp chair to sit outside and protect his sheep if Arma returned.

Night fell, and he took his place at the house's door. The moon was full that night, and he jumped at every shadow. The wind whistled through low branches at the edge of the forest, and he felt quite nervous, all alone with only his trusty staff for protection. He had almost fallen asleep when he spotted a shadow darker than the rest that was weirdly shaped. He held his breath. The shadow moved! From the forest emerged grey paws, large, pointy ears, and gleaming red eyes. It was Arma, the wolf! He shouted and banged his stick, but Arma just prowled closer. He seemed completely unafraid, almost arrogant.

Closer he snuck, ten metres, five, three, two... Arma was so close that MA could reach out and touch him, and MA almost fainted, but he stood his ground to protect his sheep. Arma crouched, ready to pounce. But then his eyes grew wide with fear. He jumped, turned around swiftly, and bounded into the woods, tail between his legs. From behind the house, an even larger shadow emerged. It was so big that MA could not see the moon for a second. The shadow also had paws and pointy ears, but it had yellow eyes - eyes that had seen fear and knew how to handle it. It also had a collar around its neck. What was it?

“It’s a lion!” Ari proudly exclaimed as she appeared behind the golden shadow, which now lay on its stomach to lick its massive paws. “All the way from sunny South Africa!”

As the sun rose softly in the East, Ari explained that she had borrowed the huge lion from a zoo in South Africa to scare off Arma, the wolf. MA could see the lion clearly now, and he was completely flabbergasted. His mouth hung open, and he forgot to close it. The lion had a massive mane of dark brown hair, a slick, muscular body, and a long golden tail with a tuft of brown fur at the end. His yellow eyes, however, looked friendly. Ari said she had also found the missing sheep behind the farmhouse; they had just wandered off to sweeter grass, so they were fine after all.

And so, all was well again. MA had every one of his 100 sheep back where they belonged, and, thanks to his smart wife, he wasn’t angry anymore. Arma the wolf never came back. Why would he, when a massive lion was patrolling their backyard?

