



Don't cry wolf once too often چوپان دروغگو

In a village which lay at the foothills of a mountain lived a little boy. He was naughty and **mischievous**¹. He played pranks on his friends and laughed at their follies. He told them impossible tales with a straight face. When they believed him, he sneered² at them, "That was a **tall story**³, you fools!"

This became a habit with him. He lied to everyone, even to his parents. They tried to correct him, but failed. His teachers advised him. But he did not change.

Holidays came. His parents asked the boy to take the sheep out to **graze** in the hills. He agreed. His mother packed lunch for him and put it in his shoulder bag. Into the bag went a flute, a **sling**⁴ and a few round pebbles. "Be careful. In the hills, there are wolves. They are clever. Often wolves come in packs, grab kids and sheep and run away. You have to be alert," said his mother, as the boy opened the gates to let the sheep out. He told her not to worry.

He waved a long stick, **herd**⁵ed the sheep, often made odd sounds to direct the sheep towards the hills. Soon he reached a slope covered with lush green grass. "Here my sheep will get their fill," he told himself and sat down under a tree.

¹ /'mɪstʃɪvəs/

² to show that you have no respect for sb by the expression on your face or by the way you speak

³ a story that is very difficult to believe : a greatly exaggerated story.

⁴ a simple weapon made from a band of leather, etc, used for throwing stones

⁵ to make animals move together as a group

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At noon he took his lunch. For some time he played on the flute. Then he felt bored. He yawned. He wished he could **pull a fast one**⁶ on someone. He scanned the scene. His eyes set on a team of woodcutters from the village moving along the footpath which lay a little distance away. He ran down the slope, toward the woodcutters, screaming, "Wolf! Wolf!"

The woodcutters raised their axes and ran to the boy. They asked him, "Where is the wolf?" The boy burst into laughter. "There is no wolf around here. I just tried a lie. And you *fell for it*." The woodcutters **scold**⁷ed him and walked away.

A few days later, once again, the boy noticed a **batch**⁸ of potters digging out mud near where the cattle were grazing. He cried, "Wolf! Wolf!" The potters dropped everything, ran to him waving their sticks and spades. "Where is the wolf?" the potter, who reached the boy first, asked. "Wolf! You thought there was a wolf around! I called out Wolf to fool you," the boy clapped his hands and laughed loudly. The potters **abused**⁹ him, called him names and went away.

The tale spread all through the village. The villagers told each other, "That boy is a liar. He calls wolf once too often."

As ill luck would have it, three days later, the boy noticed a wolf **stalk**¹⁰ing his sheep. He got the fright of his life. He had a **stout**¹¹ stick in hand, but he did not have the courage to go after the wolf. He cried, loudly, "Wolf! Wolf!" A group of villagers, who worked as a number of people or things that are dealt with as a group guards in the forest, heard the call. They thought of rushing to the boy's

⁶ trick someone.

⁷ to speak angrily to sb, especially a child, because they have done sth wrong

⁸ a number of people or things that are dealt with as a group

⁹ insult

¹⁰ to move slowly and quietly towards an animal or a person, in order to kill, catch or harm it or them

¹¹ strong and thick

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help. Then they remembered that the boy was a liar. "He is trying the same old trick. We are not fools to fall for his trick," said the leader of the group. The party moved off to another part of the forest.

The wolf charged at the boy, when it found him in its way. The boy ducked and ran for his life. The sheep ran **helter-skelter**¹². The wolf grabbed a kid and ran off. A few more wolves, waiting for their turn, too managed to grab a sheep each.

In the evening, the boy returned home. He looked sad and beaten. His mother counted the flock. Four sheep were missing. "Where are the sheep?" she asked. He told her, "Wolves came and took them away. I called for help. The guards heard my call. But they did not come to my help." "You know why? Twice you sent out false alarms. And you laughed at those who came to help you. This time, though you told the truth, the forest guards thought you were up to your dirty trick. You stupid boy. Your father won't be pleased when he learns that you lost four sheep," she shouted at him in anger.

The boy fell into her arms and sobbed. "I know now, I cried wolf **once too often**¹³. I promise you, I won't lie in future. Never again."



¹² done in a hurry and in a way that lacks organization بطور درهم و برهم

¹³ to repeat a bad, stupid, or dangerous action with the result that you get punished or cause trouble for yourself

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