The Frightened Bear and Wolves — Variant 2

Once upon a time in a certain kingdom, in a certain state, there lived a little peasant, and he had a goat and a ram. The peasant was too lazy to mow hay; winter came, there was nothing for the goat and the ram to eat, they began to bellow all over the yard, and the peasant grabbed a whip and started beating them. So the goat said to the ram: "Come on, brother, let's go into the forest; we'll find a haystack and live there." — "Let's go, brother Kozma Mikitich! It can't get any worse."

The goat stole the master's gun, and the ram a sack, and they set off together; they went along the road and found an old wolf's head. "Brother ram!" said the goat. "Take this head and put it in the sack." — "What the devil do we need it for? It's hard enough walking as it is!" — "Take it! When we get there, we'll boil ourselves some aspic." The ram picked up the wolf's head, put it in the sack, and carried it. They walked and walked and at last came to the forest. "I'm quite frozen," said the ram. And the goat saw that a fire was glowing off to one side, and said: "There's a fire burning over there; let's go there!" They went toward the fire and ran straight into some wolves; they were sitting around the fire warming themselves.

The ram was terrified, barely alive with fright. And the goat said to him: "Don't be afraid, ram!" and himself approached the wolves: "Hello, fellows!" — "Hello, Kozma Mikitich!" So the wolves thought, what a fine meal: the goat and the ram came by themselves, practically asking to be eaten. But the goat had his own plan. "Come now, brother ram! Bring here the wolf's head," he says, "we'll boil it and make aspic. And see that you pick an old wolf!" The ram took the wolf's head out of the sack and brought it to the goat. "Not that one!" says the goat. "There in the sack is another head, from the very oldest wolf — bring that one." The ram began rummaging in his sack, rummaged and rummaged and brought the same head again. "Ah, you fool," shouted the goat and stamped his feet, "not that one!.. Look, it's lying at the very bottom." The ram rummaged and rummaged again and brought the very same head. "Now that's right!" said the goat. "This very head is what I need." And the wolves were watching and thinking: "Just look how many of our kind he's killed! A whole sack of heads." "Isn't there anything, brothers," asks the goat, "in which we could prepare our supper?" Then the wolves jumped up and ran, some for firewood, some for water, some for dishes, while in their hearts they were thinking how to escape safely.

They ran, and met a bear coming toward them. "Where are you off to, gray wolves?" — "Ah, Mikhail Ivanovich! You don't know our trouble: a goat and a ram came to us, brought with them a whole sack of wolf heads, want to boil aspic; we were afraid they'd get to us too, and ran away." — "Ah, you fools!" said the bear. "The goat and the ram came to you by themselves, just take and eat them; and you got scared! Come with me." — "Let's go!"

The goat and the ram saw that the wolves were coming back, got flustered, started running around. The goat climbed up a tree, got settled, while the ram climbed and climbed but couldn't get high up, grabbed somehow with his front legs onto a branch and hung there. So the bear came with the wolves, looks: where could the goat and the ram have gone? Nowhere to be seen. "Well, brothers," said the bear to the wolves, "gather acorns, I'll start divining: where have the goat and the ram disappeared to?" The wolves gathered acorns; and the bear sat under the tree, began tossing acorns and divining, like women divine with beans.

The ram says to the goat: "Ah, goat, I'll fall; I have no strength — my legs hurt!" — "Hold on," answers the goat, "or we'll be done for; they'll eat us up!" The ram held on and held on, and then fell to the ground! The goat sees disaster inevitable, fired at that very moment from the gun and shouted at the top of his lungs: "Seize the diviner, hold him!" The bear got scared, took off running without looking back, and the wolves after him. So they all scattered. Then the goat climbed down from the tree and didn't want to stay in the forest. He returned home together with the ram, and they began to live and thrive and ward off misfortune.