

An Old Man and a Wolf

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DEDICATION This book is dedicated to my daughter, Joyce, without whose enthusiasm and encouragement I might not have had the most enjoyable ten years of living with and alongside an incredible wild creature - a Mexican Grey Wolf, Nina, part Timber Wolf and part Siberian Husky, but mostly Canis Lupus Bailei. The alternative would have been to turn Nina over to the Arizona Game and Fish Department which would have been her doom. I also would like to dedicate this book to Roberta Gregory from Seattle, Washington, who volunteered to illustrate the book after reading the text. Thank you, Roberta. **AN OLD MAN AND A WOLF PART ONE CHAPTER ONE** The Old Man first saw the wolf when she was no more than ten days old. Her eyes were barely open, showing deep sapphire blue behind half opened, stuck together lids. The Old Man had been hiking high up on the south side of the mountain behind his mobile home early in the morning of a gorgeous day, one of those rare and incredible late April mornings when the air was warm with no breeze. The sky was clear of any clouds or haze and the snow pack from the previous harsh winter had mostly melted into a deep pervasive mud that clung to his boots and ankles making walking difficult. As he traversed a rocky promontory, the Old Man heard what he initially thought might have been a bird. It was a quiet cry that became a whimper at the end. There was a large outcropping just ahead of the Old Man's trek and the pitiful cry was coming from the bottom of the rock face. The Old Man carefully approached the side of the outcropping and peered around the edge. What he saw was appalling. A mother Mexican Gray Wolf had been shot by some misanthropic hunter leaving the wolf with a shattered right rear leg and hip. The Old Man could see where the mother wolf had dragged herself up the slope by her front paws in an agonizing effort to reach her den and five pups. She died at the entrance to the den. The pups had

apparently come out of the den hoping to suckle at their mother's teats. They must have all been very hungry because ordinarily the pups would not have dared to leave the depths of the cave. He could see that four pups were dead, undoubtedly from starvation. One was still alive, barely. The Old Man carefully scrutinized the surrounding juniper and pinion pine forest and brush. He knew that the alpha male wolf would not have abandoned his mate and family while there was any life left in any of them. Then the Old Man saw an ear, muzzle, and eye of the male wolf watching him ohm about 100 feet away, around the side of one of the few old growth ponderosa pines scattered around the hillside. As their eyes met, the Old Man heard a soft deep rumbling growl emanating from the massive chest of the hundred pound wolf. The Old Man froze, eyes locked with the wolf. He knew the wolf would probably not attack him. There had never been an authenticated report of a pure bred wolf attacking a human in Arizona, or for that matter, anywhere in North America. But, he thought, there could always be a first time, especially under these conditions. Gently and quietly, the Old Man began speaking, whispering really, to the alpha male wolf: "My friend, I know and you know that you cannot feed your one remaining pup. I believe I can keep it alive and let it grow into a beautiful creature such as you. But in order to do that I must take it home with me. I cannot leave it here with you because it will die." The alpha male had stopped his growling when the Old Man had begun speaking. The wolf tilted his head to one side and watched the Old Man with both amber eyes. Almost as if the wolf had understood every word the Old Man had uttered, he crept forward until his massive body was visible and lay down with his head raised and ears alert, straight upright. The Old Man took this body language as meaning he could proceed. He gently moved his right leg forward toward the entrance of the den. The alpha male let out a gentle whimper as if he was asking for help with his family. The Old Man slowly moved toward the den. The wolf remained quiet but attentive. When the Old Man reached the entrance of the den, he saw that apparently the pups had attempted to suckle even after their mother had died as her teats had been mauled by tiny teeth to the extent that they were raw and dried. The Old Man squatted on his haunches and reached for the one pup that was still alive. He gently picked it up and cradled it in his hands, wiping the mucus from its eyes. The pup mewed and attempted to suckle his fingers. He took a large blue bandana from his hind pocket and carefully wrapped the tiny body and placed it in his large hip pocket. It was a female. He then looked at the alpha male wolf again and quietly said, "I know you may think that I am going to eat your pup but you must trust me, I will feed her and keep her warm. Now there is another problem that I must take care of, the bodies of your mate and her dead pups. I don't think it's right to leave them here in the open for scavengers to pick them apart. So I am going to move all of them back into the den and cover the entrance. Is that okay with you?" The alpha male made a low deep seated growl, then raised his head to the sky and let out a mournful howl that the Old Man could hear echoing from the surrounding hillsides. Unsure of what this meant, the Old Man nonetheless stood up and moved over to the body of the mother wolf. She had probably weighed around eighty pounds when she was alive but she had lost so much blood in her effort to reach her pups that she was only about sixty pounds now. He gently and reverently picked her up and moved to the entrance of the den. The entrance was only about two feet in diameter, so the Old Man was forced to lay her on the rock and gravel in front and gently push her as far into the den as possible. He then picked up the tiny bodies of her four dead pups and placed them next to her underbelly. The reflected sunlight through the entrance of the den showed the Old Man that the den was actually a natural cave, about twenty feet deep with a gravel floor covered with branches and leaves the wolves had dragged into the cave for warmth and comfort. He could also see there were no more pups in the den. Two large boulders guarded the entrance to the cave so the Old Man was able to place large rocks from the surrounding terrain in front of the cave, eventually completely covering the entrance. The alpha male wolf had not moved or made a sound as the Old Man worked. When he was finished, he looked at the male wolf and said, "I think that will keep the scavengers from getting to your family, my Friend. I hope it is satisfactory to you too." The Old Man turned and started to work his way down the hillside toward his home. When he was several hundred yards away but could still see where the tomb was, he saw the alpha male wolf at the covered entrance, sniffing the ground and the rocks the Old Man had placed there. Just as the wolf lost sight of the

Old Man, the alpha male let out another mournful and almost beseeching series of howls, the likes of which the Old Man had never heard before, a lament that echoed through the mountains for minutes.

CHAPTER TWO The Old Man's home was almost a mile down the mountain from where he had found the wolf pup. As he had worked his way down the side of the mountain, the pup occasionally mewed and the Old Man finally removed it from his hip pocket and cradled it in his large calloused hands. Several times he looked behind him to see the alpha male wolf quietly following about a hundred yards back. When the Old Man reached his home, he again placed the pup, still swaddled in his bandana, in his breast pocket. He found a large cardboard box he had been using to store old newspapers and magazines, emptied the contents into a black plastic trash bag and placed the box on the floor in the middle of the kitchen. He tore up some newspaper to cover the bottom of the box and found an old comforter which he bundled up and set at one end of the box. He then unwrapped the pup from his bandana and placed her in the middle of the comforter. The pup immediately began crying and whimpering. The Old Man said to the pup, "Just hold on for a few more minutes more, wolf, and I'll get you something to eat." He found an old red rubber glove under his kitchen sink, washed it out and poked a small hole in one of the fingers with an ice pick. The Old Man had a fresh quart of half and half in his propane powered refrigerator which he took out and poured about six ounces into a pan to warm up on his stove. As soon as the milk was warm to his touch, he poured some into the glove and picked up the wolf pup. The pup again tried to suckle his finger while he walked over to his kitchen table and sat down. As soon as the wolf pup smelled the milk, she scrambled and wiggled in an attempt to find the source. The Old Man cradled the pup in his left hand, holding its head gently but firmly as he brought the nursing glove to the pup's mouth. She could smell and taste the milk but she had trouble finding the right techniques to suckle until the Old Man closed the wrist opening of the glove and applied a small pressure, squeezing a few drops of the precious fluid from the tip of the finger. The wolf pup finally got it right and began suckling frantically. She pummeled the body of the glove as if she were against her mother's belly. The Old Man was gratified at the pup's progress but was concerned about feeding her too much after a prolonged starvation. The wolf pup's belly began to distend after she had consumed only a few ounces of milk so the Old Man pulled the glove away which immediately brought out loud whimpering and cries from the pup. The Old Man told her: "Now that's enough for now wolf, you'll get some more in a little while after we see if you can keep it down." He placed the pup back into the box and covered her with the comforter. After a few minutes of crying, the wolf pup closed her eyes and slept. The Old Man placed a quietly ticking clock under the blanket with the pup, hoping it would give her some comfort, perhaps reminding her of her mother's or sibling's heartbeat. When the Old Man was satisfied the wolf pup was comfortable and sleeping soundly, he washed his hands, walked into his living room and sat down in his favorite lounger. He knew from books he had read that half and half milk was not the correct formula to feed a ten day old wolf pup. He needed help and "advice from an expert. He picked up his cell phone, he lived too far out in the boondocks to have a land line (or power), and called his friend, a non-game Specialist at the Arizona Game and Fish Department in Flagstaff. To his surprise, she was in her office and picked up after the second ring. Most times he had called her she was out on a field trip. The Old Man described what had occurred during the morning in detail and asked for her advice. She told him she was not personally familiar with raising a wolf pup but she would call the Wolf Reintroduction Program manager in Pinetop, Arizona to obtain advice and call him back ASAP. He thanked her and hung up. Within a half hour the wolf pup awoke and again began whimpering. The Old Man used the same glove to feed her another few ounces of half and half milk. She seemed satisfied with that and promptly went back to sleep. While preparing lunch for himself the Old Man happened to glance out his kitchen window. To his great surprise he saw the alpha male wolf sitting in the middle of his graveled path leading to his firewood storage container about thirty feet from his front door. The wolf was staring at his house with obvious intense concentration. The Old Man took the opportunity to study the wolf through his binoculars. It was a truly magnificent animal with obvious intelligence. He had dark gray fur along his back with penetrating amber eyes with a light tan undercoat. Behind his shoulders was the typical pale ruff all wolves have. His rounded

ears had a fringe of rust colored fur with tan, almost pink, on the inside. He had a broad black nose surrounded by an almost white, perhaps cream colored muzzle. The cream colored fur, extended down around the front of his neck in what looked to be a bib. His chest appeared to be almost pure white extending down his forelegs to massive front paws. The paws looked to be almost four inches in width and were snow white. His bushy tail, which was wrapped around his hindquarter, had a black tip. He was a truly magnificent specimen of *Canis Lupis*, sometimes referred to as Lobo. His fur was only beginning to show signs of shedding his winter coat, preparing for the hot, usually dry, summer months. The Old Man also noticed that the alpha male seemed to have a region around his neck where the fur apparently had been rubbed off. He wondered if the wolf had been fitted with a radio collar until recently. The U.S. Fish and Game Department and the Arizona Game and Fish Department had a wolf reintroduction program ongoing for several decades and the wolves typically were fitted with such collars prior to release. Even though the reintroduction program released the wolves over two hundred air miles to the south east of his home, the Old Man knew that wolves could easily travel four to five hundred miles over land to establish new territories, especially during the winter months when game became scarce.

An old man rescues and adopts a wolf pup. Their bonding relationship is the basis for this warm, loving story full of anecdotes of their adventures together.

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belligerently kept on saying move aside,. The Jungle Book 10 of 241 Father Wolf looked on amazed.. Afghanistan, a 40-year-old man sits to be photographed with his 11-year-old bride.

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