

***The Boy Who Cried Wolf***  
***An Urdu Story***  
***By Kausar Ali***

Once upon a time, there was a shepherd boy named Asif who lived in a village in one of the many beautiful valleys in Northern Pakistan. Asif's village was located at the foothills of Pakistan's famous mountain range known as Kurra Kurram. These mountains are very high and very bare with no vegetation whatsoever. But it is a very different scene in the valleys. There are fast-flowing rivers, like the Swat River, which runs from the snow-covered mountains to create beautiful waterfalls and lakes below. There is lush green grass; and in the springtime the ground is covered in brightly coloured flowers and hundreds upon hundreds of butterflies take to the air creating a truly heavenly place.

There was another village further up the valley where Asif's cousin lived. Looking down from that village, the trees and houses below appeared like little toys. Asif always enjoyed this scene whenever he visited his cousin, Hamza, and would often look for his own house in the village far below. The young boy marvelled at how small and distant it all seemed.

Asif's father, Ahmed, owned a small herd of goats which he would take out of the village for grazing early each morning. Asif often liked to accompany his father on these trips as there was no school in the small village. Asif's mother always made them a lunch of meat curry, chapattis and parathas, and a lovely milk drink called lussie. She would wrap the lunch in a square of cloth and Asif would carry it with him to keep it safe until it was time to eat.

Asif was a very active boy and would run around after the goats and keep them in check. His father was very pleased and thought that such training would make Asif a very good shepherd when the boy was older.

At midday, Asif and his father would spread out a roll of cloth beneath the shade of a tree and sit down for their lunch. The young boy always enjoyed his paratha and his lussie drink. When eating, both father and son would keep a watchful eye on the goats to make sure that none wandered away from the herd.

They would always return home before sunset as there was no electricity in the village and they needed to eat their dinner before the night set in. Asif went to bed soon after his

dinner because there was little to do in the dark, and also because he had to wake very early each morning to milk the goats before taking them out to graze.

Asif enjoyed the lambing season when the goats and sheep gave birth to their kids and lambs. The young boy loved the little lambs and carried them around under his arm, imitating their tiny bleating sounds... 'Maa..maa..maa..maa.'

Hamza would often visit from the hills above, then both boys would carry the lambs around and feed them soft food from their palms and cuddle up close to them to stay warm whenever the weather turned cold.

When Asif was older his father gave him the responsibility of looking after the herd. Hamza often joined Asif and the two boys would get up early to milk the goats and then take the herd out of the village for grazing. This became a routine for both boys and the days and nights passed slowly.

Until, one dark night, a wolf attacked the chickens and goats belonging to a farmer who lived close by. This caused much concern in the village and so it was decided that two men would be posted on guard to kill the wolf if it attacked again.

The wolf did attack again, but this time the men shot and killed the beast and the village soon returned to its peaceful state once more.

Sometime later, when the two boys were sitting on a rock in the meadow watching the goats munching away at the fresh grass, Hamza said to Asif, 'The goats are grazing happily but we are always so bored. It is not fair.'

Asif thought about this for a moment then replied, 'We should do something exciting then. What shall we do?'

Naughty Hamza grinned from ear to ear. 'We should make fools of the people of the village,' he said at last.

'How do we do that?' asked Asif.

Hamza went on to remind Asif about the night the wolf attacked the chickens and goats and how the men had been posted to guard the village with guns. 'Then the wolf did attack

and the men killed it! That was very exciting!’ exclaimed Hamza. ‘But then everything became peaceful and boring again.’

Asif remembered because it was the only exciting thing that had happened in the village for a very long time.

‘You know what I am thinking,’ continued Hamza. ‘If we shout and scream and say, “The wolf is attacking again! Help! Help!” then we would see how the people in the village would run to save us.’

‘But it is very bad to tell lies,’ said Asif, who was not at all sure about his cousin’s naughty plan.

‘It is just a joke,’ insisted Hamza. ‘Don’t you want to see their worried faces as they run to help us? It will be so funny.’

‘And when they discover that there is no wolf and they see us laughing at them, they will be very annoyed with us,’ said Asif. But even as he said this, Asif had to admit that it would indeed be very funny to see the looks on the villagers’ faces as they ran into the meadow. He also had to admit that it was very boring watching the goats chew on the grass all day. ‘Okay,’ he said at last, ‘how do we do it?’

Hamza explained his plan and the two boys found themselves laughing and rubbing their hands with glee at the thought of making fun of the unsuspecting villagers.

The next morning, after milking the goats, the two boys led the herd into the meadow to graze. After enjoying their tasty lunch, packed nicely for them by Asif’s mother, they decided to carry out their naughty plan.

Hamza hid himself behind a bush while Asif ran down to the village shouting at the top of his voice, ‘Help us! Help us! The wolf is attacking Hamza! Please help us!’

As soon as the villagers heard Asif’s cries for help, they picked up their sticks and axes and ran towards the meadow. ‘Where is the wolf?’ asked one man. ‘How did he attack Hamza?’ asked another. ‘Did the wolf drag him away like he did with my goats and chickens? Tell us, where is Hamza?’

The villagers were very worried as they searched all about for the injured boy.

It was then that Hamza jumped out from his hiding place. 'Welcome. Thank you for coming,' said the cheeky boy with a big grin upon his face, 'but there is no wolf here. He ran away when I told him that the villagers were coming to kill him.' Then Hamza fell to his knees and burst out laughing. When Asif saw the looks of concern and panic on the villagers' faces he too burst out laughing and began rolling about in the grass.

The villagers were very angry with the boys, and as they walked away from the meadow they promised to tell Asif's father about his son's wicked behaviour.

When Ahmed discovered what his son had done he was very disappointed indeed. He dragged the two boys before the crowd of villagers and made them both apologise for their sneaky trick and promise never to do such a thing again.

A few months passed and life returned to normal. But one day, as Hamza and Asif were tending to the goats in the meadow, a fierce wolf came around the hill and tried to drag one of the goats away. Hamza jumped to his feet and ran after the wolf to scare it away. But the fierce wolf simply dropped the goat and got a hold of Hamza's leg instead.

Asif was terrified at the sight of his friend being dragged away by the wolf and quickly ran towards the village screaming, 'People of the village, please come quickly! The wolf is dragging Hamza away! Please help us!'

One of the villagers said, 'We are not going to be fooled again! Go back to your goats.'

'Please!' cried Asif. 'I am telling the truth. Come and help Hamza before it is too late!'

A kindly villager decided to take a look at the edge of the meadow and there he saw Hamza with his leg trapped in the wolf's powerful jaws. 'Asif is telling the truth!' he cried. 'Come help at once!'

The villagers grabbed their sticks and axes and ran to help poor Hamza. And when the wolf saw the crowd running towards him, he let go of the boy's leg and disappeared into the forest.

Two men picked Hamza up by his shoulders and they all returned to the village. The boy's leg was very badly injured and he was in a great deal of pain. Asif was close to tears and asked the villagers, 'Why did you not come sooner? Why did you not believe me?'

A woman stepped forward. 'You lied to us once before,' she explained. 'This is why we did not believe you. Do you see now why it is wrong to tell lies? You must never behave in such a way for it causes mistrust.'

Asif looked at his injured cousin, and at the villagers who had saved the boy from the wolf, and he knew then that he would never tell a single lie ever again.