

The Friendly Wolf

by Rog Phillips (as by Craig Browning)

It was an interesting experiment: take a wolf and a rabbit and interchange their instincts—then turn them loose and watch

An A\NN/A Preservation Edition.

[Notes](#)

THE TIMBER wolf appeared suddenly in the path twenty feet ahead of me. In the split second it took for me to raise my rifle and fire I noticed that its stomach was drawn in, its ribs showing, and wondered why a wolf should look half starved in this north country where game was so plentiful.

I felt the instant I had squeezed the trigger that it was a miss. I had aimed for the heart. The slug caught the wolf somewhere. The animal was knocked over. I flicked the reload and got ready for a second shot.

But the wolf was behaving queerly for a wolf. Half lowering my rifle I took a better look. My first shot had paralyzed its hind legs. It had risen on its forelegs and was trying to stand. But that wasn't what made me hesitate.

What made me hesitate was the fact that it was whining in a friendly tone, and its eyes seemed almost happy, rather than fierce and wild.

As soon as I saw it couldn't attack me I began to approach it for a closer look. Its hind quarters were laying sideways. Its bushy tail was wagging like that of a friendly dog. It whined again, softly, the sound strangely like that of a Collie.

Marvelling, I reached out a hand, ready to draw it back swiftly at the first sign of a snarl and a snap of those powerful jaws. The snarl didn't come. Instead, the wolf nuzzled my hand, still whining in a sort of talking way.

I could have closed my eyes and sworn it was a Collie. Instead, I felt tremendously sorry at having shot so hastily. Apparently this wolf was somebody's pet. Even though timber wolves were a common thing up here in the woods—and especially dangerous this time of the year, it was a shame to have hurt one that was somebody's pet.

But if it was a pet, why was it half starved? And even if it was a pet, in the starved condition it was obviously in it should have been ferocious.

Impulsively I dropped to my knees and took its head in my arms, murmuring comforting things to it. After awhile it died. I felt very bad about it.

I let it lay in the path. That way I could find it again if some other wolf didn't drag it off. The day was young and I wanted to do a lot of hunting. I was supposed to skin the creature and turn the skin in for the bounty; but the thought of doing that to it when I might have to take it to its owner made me decide against it.

I walked on.

IT WAS half an hour later that I came across the rabbit. It was a fuzzy little cottontail. I saw it on a log off to the side of the path at the same instant it saw me. I grinned at it. I wasn't out for rabbits.

When it leaped off the log in my direction, rather than the other way, I stopped. It wasn't until I felt its teeth in my leg that I reacted to its unorthodox behavior.

Frantically I stamped at it. It evaded my feet and came at me again. Its teeth tore my leg three or four times before a lucky kick caught it. It landed a few feet away, out cold. I used the butt of my gun to break its neck.

Then I shook my head, marvelling. First a timber wolf as friendly as a Collie, then a rabbit ferocious as a wolf. It didn't make sense.

I picked it up and tossed it into the underbrush, then went on—with a wary eye out for rabbits.

The next wolf was normally ferocious. Altogether I bagged four of the wild ones before deciding to turn back to the cabin. In the excitement of the hunt I had all but forgotten the rabbit and the friendly wolf.

I would have passed the spot where I killed the rabbit without a thought; but it was laying there right in the path. It was stiff now. But how had it climbed back on the path? I had broken its neck!

I kicked it off the path and went on to the place where I had left the tame wolf. I didn't see its body at first. Then I saw it laying a few feet off the path in the brush. Some other wolves had gotten to it. It was pretty well devoured.

About to turn away, I caught a gleam of something metallic. I looked closer. There was something made of metal under its ribs. Dropping my pack of wolf hides I dragged the carcass back to the path and used my knife to cut loose the thing of metal.

There was no mistaking what it was, though I had never seen one nor heard of one actually existing. It was a metal heart.

IT WAS about twice the size of an ordinary wolf heart, its outer surface and its shape giving no hint of its inner workings. From it led four short metal tubes to which arteries were attached. I scraped at the artery segment on one of the tubes and found that it was growth-bonded to the metal. Scraping the metal, I found that it was as hard as chrome.

I looked up from the metallic thing I held in my hand. I looked into the trees, the shrubs, and along the path; and my amazement grew. How could such a thing be?

Suddenly I remembered the ferocious rabbit. Did it have a mechanical heart too?

I stuffed the metal wolf heart in a pocket and hung my bundle of pelts on a tree branch and made my way back to where I had left the dead rabbit. It was still there, this time where I had last left it.

An hour later, with the dead rabbit and the wolf pelts on my back, and the metal wolf heart in my pocket, I reached the cabin.

"Hello, Jerry, you old son of a gun!" a familiar voice shouted. It was Harvy Tremont, my law partner. I had rather expected him to decide there was no use sticking around the office during court vacation.

"Hi, Harv," I yelled back at him, hastening to meet him.

On the spur of the moment I decided to wait a while before telling him what I had discovered, so it

was after a supper of beans and fried ham before I brought out the metal thing and let him see it.

“The explanation is obvious,” he said after studying it. “Some great experimental surgeon must have a laboratory near here. This is one of his experiments. It must have gotten loose and gone back to its wild state.”

I told him about the rabbit. Then, while he watched, I started to work on it. First I lathered and shaved it. I was looking for scars in the skin. I found them. Scars that indicated surgery.

I cut into the body carefully until I had exposed the small metal heart—and something I had missed in the wolf. It was a small button from which extremely fine wires radiated. Fine as wires from an old Ford spark coil, they radiated from the small metal button to the metal heart, the stomach, the liver, the kidneys, and to spots where there were small things my meager knowledge of anatomy couldn't identify. Nor was Harv any better.

The rest of the evening we spent discussing the thing. I told him every detail of the behavior of the two animals.

“Just putting in a mechanical heart couldn't reverse the nature of a beast,” Harvy said. “Or could it? Come to think of it, it might, to a certain extent. When you get excited or mad your heart beats faster. When it beats faster you get more excited. If you had a heart that refused to beat faster when you get mad, it might have the effect of calming you down in a hurry.”

“There's more to it than that,” I said. “That button with its radiating wires—do you suppose it could be some sort of control for glands and organs? Getting mad or afraid causes the adrenals to work, shooting adrenalin into the blood. I vaguely remember reading somewhere that emotions upset the balance of the glands, and that upset of that balance produces emotions.”

“I think you've hit something there,” Harvy said. “That's what caused the reversal of nature of these two animals. Their glandular balance was fixed by the control to owner and operator, could not help upset in a different way. A rabbit's reaction to seeing you would ordinarily be fear. This one's was rage. A wolf's would ordinarily be rage. This one's was friendliness.”

“It adds up,” I concluded. “Somewhere around here is probably the world's greatest surgeon. Tomorrow morning we'd better take a trip down to the store and inquire about him.”

THE “STORE” as it was called, was really a trading post. Twenty miles north of Trail, it served as supply depot for the dozens of fellows like myself who owned cabins in the British Columbia wilds where they could get away from city life and relax at times. Ike Garson, its owner, knew everyone. The road from Trail was so tortuous and, in places, so steep, that it was impossible to go in and out from Trail on a tank of gas. Therefore no one could possibly come into the country without stopping at the store and buying gas.

I knew Ike Garson would know who the master surgeon was and how to get to his place, because he had wormed out of me the fact that I was a lawyer, my name, and all pertinent data about me the very first time I had come up here, and had not forgotten any of it two years later when I showed up the second time.

But I also knew that, inquisitive and retentive as he was, he was even more close mouthed. A man could hide out from the law in these foothills of the Canadian Rockies without Ike ever turning him in—but not without Ike knowing he was hiding out. It would take a little adroit handling for us to get him to tell us if a doctor was up here.

In the morning we took my car. I took the two metal hearts and the metal button with its fine wires

with me, shoving them in a deep pocket in my jacket. It was only four miles to the store from my cabin. It took three quarters of an hour to drive it. That's the kind of road it was.

Ike Garson and a couple of Indians were busy unpacking some canned goods when we walked in.

"Howdy, Mr. Blish," he said.

"Howdy, Ike," I replied. "Ike, this is my law partner, Harvy Tremont."

"I know," Ike said dryly. "Met him yesterday." He reached out a lean hand and shook with Harv, gravely acknowledging the introduction.

"Say, Ike," I said, putting frankness into my voice. "Do you know a doctor that has a cabin up here? The reason I ask is that a doctor friend of Harvy's in Spokane is coming up here to spend a couple of weeks with some doctor. He invited us to drop around, but I don't have any idea where the doctor lives up here."

"There ain't no doctor up here," Ike replied. "Nearest one's half way to Trail. Say! Maybe you mean Doc Leary. He's a doctor but don't practice none. Has a cabin up beyond you, but on the other fork. What'd you say the name of your doctor friend was?"

"Dr. Nelson," Harv said smoothly.

"Ain't arrived yet," Ike said. "I'll tell him where you live when he does."

"O.K., Ike," I said. "Thanks. What I really came down for was some more bacon and flapjack flour. And I've got four wolf hides out in the car."

"Good work, son," Ike said. "I'll send Charlie out and get them."

IT WAS nearly noon before we came within sight of doc Leary's cabin. The road on the right fork was even worse than on my own, which I would have considered an impossibility.

It was several times bigger than my own cabin. Two stories high and maybe forty feet wide, with a solid shingle roof—designed for both winter and summer living.

There was a nice car parked under a flimsy structure with slab siding. Between it and the cabin was a small truck with enclosed body.

I drove boldly up in front of the porch. Harv and I climbed out of the car, slamming the doors. Harv waited for me until I rounded the car, then we walked up the plank steps to the generous porch together.

Harv knocked loudly. The sound echoed.

"Gone hunting, maybe," he said.

"Yeah," I agreed. "If he were here he would have answered by now. Let's try once more, though. I hate to go back without seeing him after all the trouble it took to get here."

Harv knocked again. When he stopped we could hear sounds inside.

"He must have been asleep," Harv suggested.

We relaxed. A moment later the door opened.

I remembered Dr. Leary the moment I set eyes on him in the doorway, but I didn't let on. He had an unusually wide brow with receding scalp, and wide spaced eyes that seemed even more wide spaced

because of the small, narrow nose.

He had been mixed up in a fight with his neighbors over some dogs he kept. The S.P.C.A. had taken it up, and the newspapers had aired it. All that had been ten years ago when I was in high school.

“Doctor Leary?” I asked. At his nod I said, “I’m Jerry Blish and this is my law partner, Harvy Tremont. I own the cabin over the hill on the other fork. Ike Garson told me my nearest neighbor was a doctor—and I thought I would drop in and get acquainted.”

“Oh yes. Yes,” doc Leary said in a naturally thin, reedy voice. “Won’t you come in?” He said it so clinically that for just an instant I had a fleeting impression of nurses and inner offices and things.

I stepped past him, Harv behind me. The doc was a trifle taller than either of us, but in an almost fragile way. And he had that air of abstraction I had run across occasionally in people. I called it zero personality. It was different than a negative personality in my books. With a negative personality you at least feel the person is human and is reacting to your personality; but with a zero one you are always conscious of a total lack of reaction.

The metal hearts were burning my pocket. For some reason that lay in my subconscious, however, I hesitated about mentioning them.

“Ike says you’ve been living up here quite a while,” I lied. I sighed elaborately. “Wish I could afford to. Quiet and peaceful away from the noise and bustle of the city. Best I can do is two or three weeks once a year.”

“Yeah. Me too,” Harv put in his two bits.

“Then you’re going back to the city soon?” doc Leary asked, his tone slightly hopeful.

“In a couple of weeks,” Harv answered.

“No doubt you’re hungry,” doc Leary said. “It’s quite a drive up here from the store. Make yourselves comfortable while I fix some lunch. There’re some magazines over there on the table.”

Again it was like a doctor, telling you to wait in the reception room. He disappeared through a thin slab door to the back of the cabin.

I walked over to the table and picked up a magazine. It was as I had suspected. The doc had brought his office magazines up here with him. The newest one was seven years old!

THEN MINUTES later doc Leary reappeared with a tray. On it were two plates loaded with hot canned beans, some bread and butter, and two empty cups. He set it down and went back to the kitchen, immediately coming back with a cup of coffee in one hand and a percolator in the other.

“I won’t eat with you,” he said. “I very seldom have a midday meal; but I’ll have coffee with you.”

He poured from the percolator into our cups, set the percolator on the table, then sank into a chair facing us, his cup of coffee still in his hand.

He tasted the coffee, then drank some of it noisily. The beans were my favorite brand. I was hungry. Harv evidently was, too. In a few minutes we had finished the beans and our first cup of coffee.

Doc Leary got up and poured us a second cup. I had decided not to let his manner bother me. Let him act like a doctor! To heck with him.

I set my freshly poured second cup of coffee down and lit a cigaret. Harv did the same. Doc Leary

watched, then stood up.

“If you’ll excuse me for a moment...” he said.

I watched him go up the stairs to the second floor. He was nearly at the top when my cigaret dropped out of my fingers. I rescued it from my lap hastily. The quick movement made me feel funny.

I blinked my eyes, took a deep drag on the cigaret, and turned to look at Harv. As I looked, his cigaret dropped from his lips. He went through the same motions I had—quick rescue of the cigaret, dazed look, then blinking eyes.

Then we looked at each other with dawning comprehension that was changing to horror. We had been drugged!

I leaped up and started to run toward the front door. I could never remember afterward how far I got before I passed out.

* * *

I awoke.

Did you ever wake up like that? Abruptly? Fully awake and vividly alive? I was awake. I was intensely awake, and I knew that in my sleep I had been so intensely happy about something that I had had to wake up to consciously enjoy being so happy.

I tried to remember what I had been so happy about in sleep; but everything about me was so conducive to enjoyment of being awake that I couldn’t recall it—and quickly decided that whatever it was, it couldn’t have been more enjoyable than the things around me, now that I was awake.

Directly over my head the rafters of the roof merged with the wall. A small gray spider lurked there in one corner of his web. I had never seen such a cute spider nor such a beautiful one. His gray coloring was soft and mousy. His tucked-in legs were hollow nylon reeds containing threads of muscle ready to come to life. His web, beautiful and gossamer, stretched between the two rafters, trapping the brilliant dust motes that cavorted in the narrow shaft of sunlight coming from a pinpoint hole in the shingles directly over it.

My scalp started to itch. Absently I started to reach up and scratch it. My hand was arrested half way up. I turned my eyes to see what held it. My wrist was imprisoned in a band of steel lined with soft leather, and a light but strong chain went from the bracelet to the side of the bed.

But in the same instant that I discovered that, the itching in my scalp became a pleasure-pain. I became almost dizzy with the joy of it—and the links of the chain were beautiful, gleaming circlets of linked metal—a poetry of form. I was happy they were there. If they hadn’t been I might have scratched my scalp and never known the ecstasy of pleasure the itching was causing.

It was wonderful. I writhed in a delirium of joy. And in my writhings my hands jerked against the chains and I discovered a new source of ecstasy in the pleasure-pain of the bracelets of steel and leather jerking at my wrists.

I sobbed in happiness as I flailed my arms, jerking at the chains. Each abrupt, violent jerk sent a wave of dizzying ecstasy through me.

But now, a delicious drowsiness was creeping over me. A lethargy possessed my arms that was as wonderful as the pleasure-pains. They relaxed on the covers.

Dimly I saw the face of doc Leary hovering over me. Then I closed my eyes and slept.

THE GRAY spider, the Evil, Evil gray spider dropped slowly until its lecherous, fat body touched my cheek. I tried to move. I was paralyzed. I had managed to lift my head a little. It froze in position.

The gray spider began to weave a web about my head. Round and round it went, leaving its trail of web behind it, ever thicker, ever more dense, choking, blotting out light.

In horror I knew what it was doing. It was enwrapping my head in a coating of web. Then it would lay its eggs. The eggs would hatch out into thousands of baby spiders within the cocoon, and they would feed on me—my eyes, the tender flesh in my nostrils, my tongue and throat.

I knew now the source of my paralysis. The spider had stung me. I wouldn't die. I would be conscious and alive while the baby spiders fed on me, so that my flesh would remain firm with life and not rot.

But suddenly I broke the bonds of paralysis. I awoke. The little gray spider was in his web in the rafters, his glittering eyes watching me. And I knew that my dream had not been mine, but the thoughts of that evil little insect.

It watched me with its beady eyes and waited. Waited for what? For me to become weak. That was it.

The smell of dust was strong in the air. This was an attic, up under the rafters. Thin shafts of sunlight bit through the gloom and lit up the insanely, madly gyrating dust. It filled the air I breathed, coating my nostrils.

I lifted a hand and suddenly remembered the chains. I was chained! Chained in an attic by a mad doctor! Why?

I had been drugged. I remembered everything now. There had been dope in the beans—or was it the coffee? And Harv had been drugged too! Doc Leary was going to put metal hearts in us like he had in the wolf and the rabbit.

He was going to make us into monsters! He was going to cut into my chest and take out my heart—hold it dripping in his hands, then toss it aside while he inserted a metal pump.

He couldn't! I wouldn't let him. I had heard of animals gnawing off a leg caught in a trap in order to get free. I would do the same. Better to escape without my hands than to have my heart taken out.

By bringing one hand up as far as it would go and bending my head over I could reach my wrist with my teeth. Sobbing, my saliva making the skin of my wrist slippery, I bit in.

A hand gripped my hair and pulled my head back. A sharp pain stabbed at my shoulder. I had been too late! Doc Leary had come! He was bending over me. He was drawing a needle out of my shoulder now. I fought the unconsciousness creeping on me. I knew it was too late. I would never be myself again—because—he—was—going—to...

I WAS ASLEEP and yet not asleep. I felt—separated from myself. I was looking at my thoughts as if I were removed from them. I was remembering my delirium of joy, and my agony of fear.

I knew the truth. Doc Leary had operated on me after he had drugged me. Those two waking nightmares had been caused by emotions—emotions produced by the mechanisms he had placed in me.

They had been necessary. It had been necessary to calibrate the emotion controls and search for

normal settings.

I tried to remember how I had felt during those times of emotion. How many had there been? I had a vague memory of being mad with rage and anxious to kill, happy and delighted at everything about me, sad and despondent, weeping, laughing, bitter, coldly unemotional, worried, terrified...

What was I now? I was apart from my emotions in some way. My thoughts and emotions were on the other side of the room of my mind where I could look at them objectively. I could—I could be terrified or sad or anything at all now, and it would be objective rather than gripping me in its subjective force. And yet—I couldn't have any emotions right now.

I opened my eyes. The little gray spider was still in its web. It was slightly shrivelled—dead from starvation.

A movement at the foot of the bed caught my eye. I looked down. Doc Leary was standing there watching me.

“How do you feel?” he asked.

“All right,” I answered.

“Do you feel anger at me for what I've done to you?” he asked.

“N—no,” I hesitated, exploring my feelings.

“I want you to understand why I did it,” he said. He was trying to be human, I knew; but it still came out clinically. He had been immersed in his profession too deeply.

“I knew there was no danger,” he said. “I'd done it to all kinds of animals. I learned after I doped you that you knew that. I found the artificial hearts in your pocket and realized they were the reason you had come to see me. But I didn't know that then. It had nothing to do with what I did.

“I knew that no man in his right mind would ever give his consent for such an operation. Yet I also felt that any man would be very glad it had been done when it was an accomplished fact.”

I looked at his wide eyes and overly broad forehead and listened.

“But even if it didn't turn out as I expected it to,” he went on. “I knew that eventually I would have to do it to a human being. I'd done it to dogs, rabbits, wolves. I'd done it so many times it was reduced to simple routine like taking out an appendix. But never to a creature that could talk and reveal how it affected the mind. Even if it had destroyed your reason I would have had to finish my work—my life work—by doing it to a human being.”

I felt the beginnings of pity for him stir in me—and slip away. I listened and watched the play of expression on his face.

“I would have done it to myself—gladly—rather than to anyone else, if I could. I would rather have done that, so I could study the mental effects first hand. But you and your partner showed up. It was an opportunity I had waited years for. I seized it without hesitation. I didn't wait. Every minute might mean I had lost my one opportunity. Regardless of what might happen after it was over, I had to do it.

“You won't regret it, I think. I've spent days upon days perfecting the controls, thinking of everything, making them fool proof—perfect. You might think ill of me for a time. But fifty years from now you won't. You will still be alive and healthy. I don't know how long you will live; but if a perfect heart that will never wear out or run down, and a mind that remains calm and untroubled except when you want

some specific emotion, are all that it takes to keep the body healthy and young, then you should live many centuries.”

THERE WAS a thin film of waxy perspiration on his wide forehead with its baby-smooth skin. His eyes were bright.

“I’m going to set you free shortly,” he said. “I had to have you in chains before—until I could study your emotional states at various settings, and determine the settings for stability. You might have hurt yourself or killed me while you were adjusted insanely. You might still kill me. The act of killing doesn’t need an emotional key. It can be done with calmness as easily as with rage or fear or frustration or frenzy. I won’t care too much now. My researches are finished. I’ve sent the film record of the operations and my detailed reports and still pictures to the proper places for such things. My life work is done and I’m ready to die.”

The film of perspiration was slowly drying out. He was calm again.

“The control center is about where your appendix would be,” he went on in an easier tone. “I want you to take it slow and learn how to operate it. It’s fixed so that unless you are pressing on one of the emotion studs you will have a calm mind. That way, if your emotions get out of control they will automatically revert to normalcy in the frenzy of movement they set up. Do you understand what I mean?”

I nodded, but didn’t say anything.

“Perhaps,” he said, a smile flitting over his lips. “You will find manually controlled emotions an asset in your law business. For example—”

He stepped around from the foot of the bed and pulled aside the covers. His hand reached out, and a finger pressed a spot on my side.

He was such a pathetic old man. He had lived a solitary life—persecuted by his neighbors until he had had to retreat to the wilderness where there were no neighbors. If I could only comfort him, take his tired head in my arms and comfort him.

I blinked back the tears, unashamed of my feeling.

Then his hand drew away and he stepped back to the foot of the bed.

“You see?” he said quietly. “Sorrow—turned on like striking a chord on the piano. Genuine emotion instead of simulated. You will learn how to use it—and all your emotions.”

He smiled. Drawing a small key out of his pocket he came around and unlocked the bracelets on my wrists. They fell away, dropping to the floor with a rattling of the chains attached to them.

“NOW YOU’RE free again,” he said, stepping back. Cautiously I sat up and moved over until I was sitting on the edge of the bed. Doc Leary watched me.

I stood up, swaying weakly for a minute, then feeling strength course through me.

I pulled aside my white cotton hospital cloak and looked down at my skin over the spot where the emotion controls were. There were tattooed words in a small circle.

“You press on the tattoo mark for the desired emotion,” doc Leary explained.

I nodded my understanding.

“The harder you press the stronger the emotional intensity,” he added.

I nodded again. Then I went over and put my fingers around his throat.

I pulled him over to the bed and pushed him down, not in a hurry to squeeze too hard. He didn’t resist too much.

The look in his eyes was more puzzled than afraid.

I made sure I could do what I intended doing with only one hand, then reached down and pressed the spot that said “Happy.”

Almost at once I felt very happy. I smiled happily at doc Leary and unleashed the strength in the fingers of my other hand, about his throat.

He struggled a little. At the last the puzzled look in his eyes was replaced by fear.

At the very last his eyes suddenly came to life with what seemed to be a flash of comprehension of the reason why I was killing him. The reason I HAD to kill him.

Then he was dead. I was happy. I was happy he had understood. I was happy it was over. It felt good to be happy. I kept my finger in place and took the key and went in search of Harv.

When I found him and learned doc Leary hadn’t performed the operation on him I pressed the happiness button harder and became very, very happy about it.

We found my clothes downstairs in a closet. We drove back to my cabin in silence. I knew he was trying to understand why I had killed the doctor.

He did the driving, while I sat there, one finger on the happiness button, just strong enough so that I remained mildly happy.

When he stopped my car beside his in the shadow of my cabin I climbed out. He walked beside me. I pushed open the door and went in. He was right behind me.

I went over to the chest of drawers by the bunks and looked at a picture setting there. It was a picture of my wife.

Then I searched for and found the sadness button and pressed it gently. I felt tears well into my eyes.

Behind me I heard a long drawn breath containing a wealth of comprehension and pity I knew now that Harv understood why I had killed doc Leary.

A lawyer doesn’t spend his life in front of a jury where he turns his emotions on and off like stations on a radio.

I cried softly—for myself—and for the timber wolf who had been starving slowly before he met up with me because he could feel only friendliness for his natural prey.

Then I lifted my finger, and felt my thoughts smooth out into unruffled calm. In time I would get used to being a lawyer twenty-four hours a day.

THE END.

Notes and proofing history

Scanned with preliminary proofing by A\NN/A
February 12th, 2008—v1.0

from the original source: *Fantastic Adventures*, February, 1950