



The Best is yet to Come



Once upon a time, about four hundred years after Noah got off the ark, there was a little ram playing on a hillside. Now I can't say for sure I know how his story unfolded. I don't speak ram, and even if I did, I'm not sure that he would tell me his whole adventure and where he had come from and where he had been born and if he had a lot of other brothers and sisters and whether or not he was good or Baaaaad. So, if you'll allow me to, I'll tell you the story the way I imagine it as I sit in the shade of a great tree and watch the clouds dance by.

I think of him as a happy little ram jumping from rock to rock and eating the greenest of grass until he was fat and satisfied. About a year old, I guess this ram loved to run up and down the hill as fast as he could go. He probably found great pleasure in butting heads with the other rams and hearing how the crack of their horns echoed down in the valley below. I imagine he looked at the older rams, with great horns curled all about and twisted in thick braids. Did he snort a bit? Did he like to puff out his chest and make his hooves click and clack across the ground? Did he run to the top of the hill in the afternoon to catch the sun and feel the wind tickle his nose? I suppose we'll never know.

But there is something we can be sure of.

One day, on a very unfortunate day, when the young ram's horns had just begun to curl about a bit more, he ran right into a bramble, a thicket, a tangle of bushes, and he stuck fast. Try as he might, he could not get untangled. Try as hard as he could, there was no getting free. In fact, it seemed he became more entangled. Eventually, he was so worn out that he did the best he could to just lie down, giving up all hope of ever being rescued. Of at least this we can be fairly certain. But then we imagine again:

Late that afternoon, he heard voices. He had encountered humans before. Though he was from a wild herd, he had seen other goats, sheep, and rams shepherded about the hills by men and boys. He couldn't see who it was that was coming, but there were two voices: a father and a son. This ram, like all other rams, didn't speak human, so he couldn't understand their words, but he could hear them making themselves busy with some task just on the other side of the outcropping of rocks.

At some point, their voices got more urgent, and it seemed someone was crying. The ram listened intently, wanting to know what was happening. Then the sky thundered. It was another voice. It rang and echoed all the way down the mountain into the valley far below, louder than the crack of the horns of two giant rams, more resounding than a herd of rams racing across rocky soil.

Then silence followed by footsteps. And now we are back to the part of the story we know for sure. A man made his way to the thicket and found the young ram therein. A little twist of the horns by the strong hands of this old shepherd, maybe a slice or two at the thicket with the knife in his hand, and there beside the man, a young boy who looked fearful, sad, and relieved all at the same time.

The ram thought himself as happy as the man, who picked up the small creature and hugged him tightly to his chest. I imagine the old shepherd shed a tear or two himself, kissed the ram, and thanked the God of heaven.

This is only half of the story. The hour is late, and I have to busy myself with other things. I'll tell you more tomorrow.

But don't worry.

The best is yet to come.