Everyone in town is terrified of The Big Bad Wolf. But will getting rid of him let everyone live happily ever after?

BY MICHAEL BUCKLEY • ART BY PETER FERGUSON

You've all heard of The Big Bad Wolf, right? He huffed and puffed and blew a couple pigs' houses down. Well, don't be too impressed with the Wolf. One of the houses he blew down was made out of hay, while the other was made entirely out of twigs. Pigs aren't known for their smarts, but these two were a couple of numbskulls. Who builds houses out of hay and twigs? It seems to me those pigs were asking for disaster. On the other hand, their brother, whose name was Oliver, built his house with bricks—and it survived old Big and Bad's lung-powered blast.

Well, unfortunately for Oliver, he didn't get his happily ever after. His two brothers, Chuck and Bruce, were now homeless, and Oliver had to let them move in with him. Chuck and Bruce were lousy houseguests who never cleaned up after themselves and spent most of their days on the couch, watching talk shows and eating microwave burritos. Worse still, when word spread through the village that the only safe house in town was Oliver's, a steady stream of neighbors came knocking on his door begging for shelter.

"The Wolf got into my hen house and scared the chickens so bad they won't cluck!" Old McDonald said. "They used to cluck-cluck here and cluck-cluck there, but now it's cluck-cluck nowhere. We need somewhere safe to stay until the Wolf goes away."

"He stole one of my bags of wool," Baa Baa Black Sheep complained. "I was saving it for the little boy who lives down the lane!"

"He ate my Granny!" Little Red Riding Hood said, as she plopped herself down in Oliver's living room and snatched the remote control. "My, what a big television you have!"

Oliver was too good a pig to turn anyone away, and soon his house was overrun with princes, princesses, fairy godmothers, magical frogs and fish, talking rabbits, and dwarves. Oliver tried not to complain, even though every time Rapunzel took a shower she clogged up the drain with her hair. He kept his mouth shut when Goldilocks kicked him out of his own bed because hers wasn't "just right." He even bit his lip when Puss in Boots left hair balls all over the house. But when Little Miss Muffet spilled her curds and whey on his new sofa, he realized the only way he was going to get everyone
out of his house was to find a way to make them feel safe again. He knew the only way he could do that was to do something about the Wolf.

“ar have a plan to get you all back into your homes,” Oliver told his new roommates.

“You’re going to kill the Wolf?” the frog prince croaked.

“Absolutely not!” Oliver cried. “We should talk to him. If we explain that eating people is not acceptable behavior, he’ll understand.”

“The only thing a wolf understands is the sword,” Prince Charming said.

“If we use violence to stop him, we will be no better than he is,” Oliver explained.

“I know a guy who can help us,” the ugly duckling said, ignoring Oliver’s warning. “He has helped towns get rid of witches, ogres, and even an evil queen or two. I’ll send word to him today.”

Even though Oliver protested, the group agreed that contacting the tough guy was the answer to their problems.

Weeks passed, and one day, while Oliver was cleaning the Beast’s toenail clippings off the coffee table, there came a knock at the door.

“He’s here!” the ugly ducking shouted as he opened the door. In walked a pig like Oliver had never seen. He was more than six-feet tall and wore fatigues from head to hoof. He had huge muscles and arms as thick as tree trunks.

“The name’s Carl Hambone,” the big pig said. “I’m here to fix your wolf problems.”

The crowd invited him in.

“Getting rid of the Wolf will take courage and sacrifice,” the big pig said. “You’re going to have to work hard. I won’t settle for anything but your best. But when we’re done, that fleabag mongrel will be an ancient memory, and you will all be safe.”

“The Wolf is a seriously bad egg,” Humpty Dumpty said. “How do we know you can handle him?”

“Allow me to demonstrate,” Hambone said as he karate-chopped Oliver’s coffee table, smashing it into a million tiny toothpicks. He head-butted a nearby wall creating an enormous hole in the plaster. Then he picked up a vase and took a bite out of it, like it was a sandwich.

“Tough enough for you?” Hambone asked.

Everyone agreed that Hambone was the right pig for the job. His no-nonsense attitude impressed them.

“The first thing we have to do is chop down the forest,” Hambone said.

“But the forest provides us with wood and food,” Oliver cried.

Hambone sneered at Oliver. “The Wolf uses the forest to hide. It has to be destroyed for the good of everyone. We’re all going to have to make sacrifices, including you. I’m going to seize this house as a base of operations.”

“But—”

“Sacrifices! It’s for your safety!”

Now all three little pigs were homeless. Luckily, Sleeping Beauty let them sleep on an old mattress in her garage. But sharing a bed with his brothers was a nightmare for Oliver. Chuck and Bruce loved to eat Sloppy Joes late at night, and they used the only blanket they had as a napkin. Not that Oliver, or anyone else for that matter, got any shut-eye anyway. Everyone was forced to get up at the crack of dawn for fitness training. Hambone had them scaling walls, doing hundreds of sit-ups, and holding their breaths in the nearby pond. When they were tired, he made them run. When they were exhausted, he made them run more, and at the end of the day the real work started. Everyone labored through the night assembling an enormous machine Hambone called “The Equalizer.” Hambone said it was his secret weapon. Unfortunately, the machine leaked a horrible chemical that smelled worse than the Old Woman’s shoe on a hot, sticky day.

“This is crazy,” Oliver complained to his friends. “He’s too tough! He had Old Mother Hubbard doing push-ups in the rain.”

“We don’t need your nay-saying around here, Oliver,” his former friends cried. “Hambone obviously knows what he’s doing.”
After several weeks of work, "The Equalizer" was finally finished. The crowd stepped back and gazed at the enormous machine. Oliver was shocked to find Hambone's secret weapon was a humongous fan.

"We're going to give the Wolf a taste of his own medicine," Hambone said proudly. "'The Equalizer' will huff and puff and blow the Wolf to the other side of the planet!"

"Shouldn't we at least try talking to the Wolf, first?" Oliver cried. But he was drowned out by a loud warning bell. The Big Bad Wolf was on his way to town. The townspeople rushed here and there, remembering the drills they had practiced with Hambone. They gathered around "the Equalizer." Oliver stood with everyone else, but he couldn't stop feeling like they were all making a mistake. Moments later, the Wolf swaggered into town. He banged on doors and windows, shouted threats and howled as loud as he could. But once he got a good look at the village, his face curled up in shock.

"What happened to this place?" he cried. "It looks like a hurricane blew through here."
“We’ve come together to stop your reign of terror,” Hambone shouted.

“Are you saying you did this on purpose?” the Wolf said, as he continued to glance around at the village. “I’m flattered, but I’m only one wolf!”

Hambone flipped on his machine. The gigantic blades began to spin, and a gust of wind blasted the Wolf. He tried to stand his ground, but the force was too great. He was blown away, high into the sky, never to be seen again. Unfortunately, the fan had the same terrible effect on the little town, too. Houses were flattened. The Butcher, the Baker and the Candlestick Maker’s shop collapsed to the ground.

“Problem solved!” Hambone said when he turned off “The Equalizer.”

The crowd looked around at their once beautiful village. Everything they had worked so hard to save was gone. The only thing standing was Oliver’s tiny brick house. “Look what you’ve done!” Cinderella cried. She was so angry she took off her glass slipper and threw it at Hambone.

“Our village is ruined!” Little Boy Blue cried. Hambone gazed around at the crowd. “Why the sad faces? You’re safe! At least you are for now. But the town is still a target. The mountains are filled with giants, and the river is overrun with hostile mermaids. We need to build a wall along the border and dig a moat we can fill with crocodiles. There’s going to be a lot of sacrifices made.”

“Let’s start with you,” the townspeople cried. Together they turned “the Equalizer” toward him and flipped the switch. The big bad pig was whipped high over the village and far, far away.

“We should have listened to you, Oliver,” all seven dwarves cried.

“That’s right, Oliver,” Chuck and Bruce squealed. “It’s our fault the town was destroyed. What are we going to do?”

Oliver turned to his friends. “We’re going to rebuild, and this time we’re all going to use bricks. You can live with me until we’re done, but there are going to be a few new rules. For one, no curds and whey on the sofa.”

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