

TEMUJIN AND THE WOLF

Brian Wrixon

The wolves came stealthily and silently in the night and stayed downwind from the dogs. While Temujin and his family slept soundly in their ger, the pack attacked and the ensuing slaughter was quickly accomplished. The wolves ran off into the darkness carrying nourishment for their waiting cubs. When morning came Temujin's mother went out early to do the milking and hurriedly rushed back with the news that the wolves had struck during the night. Five fat-tailed sheep had been taken by the ravaging pack in such a careful way that the family's dogs had not raised a single warning. Blood stains on the ground clearly marked the direction that the wolves had taken. Temujin's father and his two older brothers left on a wolf hunt soon after breakfast and the twelve year old boy was allowed to accompany them. This was Temujin's first wolf hunt.

Temujin wore his name proudly. The founder of his nation, the father of all Mongolians was the emperor Chinggis Khaan. Known in the western world as Genghis Khan, the ruthless but charismatic leader had been named Temujin at birth. Appointed the supreme leader of all the Mongols in the year 1206, the immense empire that he ultimately controlled was the largest connected land empire ever created in the history of mankind. To bear the great Khan's birth name was a source of immense pride for Temujin.

Temujin's father and his two brothers were armed with rifles as they rode off in pursuit of the wolves. They carried little else with them on their horses. All the supplies that they needed had been loaded onto a pack horse that Temujin, who was not armed, led behind him. In this way the hunters were not encumbered with heavy packs and could engage in pursuit when speed was required. Temujin would have preferred to be carrying a rifle as well on his first hunt, but he understood the explanation that his father had given and the need for speed. There was no thought of rescuing the taken sheep – the hunt was pure revenge. The Mongols' relationship with wolves was a unique and complicated one. In many respects the wolf was regarded as sacred.

The god Tenger had provided the land for man's use and the wolf protected the land from over-grazing by domesticated flocks and from destruction caused by pests like marmots. But then the wolf's work hit close to home and became personal, such as it had last night, then the wolf became the enemy.

The wolf pack's trail was easy to pick up. It led across the flat green steppe to the gentle rocky hills in the distance. From past experience Temujin's father knew that the wolf den would be located in these hills and that the pack would be close by. Sometime later the hunters were at the base of the hill and Temujin's father told the young boy to stay there with the pack horse and supplies as he and his older brothers ascended the hill in search of the wolves. Suddenly a large wolf appeared on the crest of the hill and disappeared down the other side. The hunters gave chase. Gunfire soon erupted from the other side of the hill and Temujin knew that if his father and brothers were successful, they would stop and skin the carcasses before returning to where he was waiting. He had time to kill so he tied his horse and the pack horse to a tree and decided to explore the area where the wolf had first been spotted.

Not far from where he had left the horses, Temujin discovered a hole in the hillside which he thought looked very much like an entrance to a den. He returned to the horses and got a length of rope and a large sack. He fashioned a noose like a snare at one end of the rope and climbed back up the hill to where the den was located. He sat above the entrance and lowered the noose over the hole. It was now a matter of waiting with attentive eyes and ears. From inside the den Temujin could hear the sound of whimpering. There was obviously a cub inside and likely more than one. His plan was to wait until a cub was brave or stupid enough to emerge and then to snare it like a rabbit as it poked its head out of the hole. He would have to be quick and he would only have one chance. If there was more than one cub in the den, the others would likely be too afraid to come out after one had been caught. Temujin knew what their fate would be when his father and brothers returned. They would build a fire and suffocate the cubs in the den. He listened carefully and before long he heard a scratching and scrabbling noise coming from inside. Soon a little nose and then a head could be seen below him. When the wolf cub's front legs and

shoulders were past the noose, Temujin gave a great tug upwards. The noose tightened around the cub and he had him. He quickly dumped it into the sack and as he did so, he noticed a white blaze on the cub's chest and the fact that the end of the wolf's tail was completely white. "You're all mine now, White Tip!" he exclaimed.

About an hour later, the three hunters returned to where the horses were tethered. They had five wolf pelts with them. Any that Temujin's mother could not use for sewing mitts, hats or jackets would fetch a fine price at the market in the city. Temujin hoisted up the sack and told his father and brothers that he had a hunting prize of his own. When his father learned that it was a wolf cub, he told his son to dash it against a rock or a tree to kill it. The young boy argued that it was a very special wolf and that if they raised it to maturity, White Tip's pelt would not only be unusual but priceless. His father grabbed the wolf's neck through the sack and unfolded the material around it. They were all amazed to see the white blaze on the cub's chest and the white tipped tail. While raising a wolf cub in captivity would be no easy task, Temujin's father agreed to his son's proposal, provide that the boy took on full responsibility and did all the work.

The family's dogs never did get used to having a wolf in their midst and Temujin successfully brought White Tip through his first year of life. Temujin fed and watered the wolf each day and was able to pet it and to play with it. He was careful to keep it away from the dogs however. Over the course of those months, the wolf had become something of a pet, despite the fact that it was still a wild animal. Temujin awoke one spring morning to discover that White Tip was gone. He had heard wolves howling in the area the night before and he guessed that White Tip had somehow managed to escape his enclosure to join them. No doubt they were the survivors of the pack that his family had attempted to wipe out the previous year. He had come to love his wolf over time and actually preferred the fact that he had escaped back to the wild, rather than be slaughtered for his remarkable pelt as had been the original planned fate for the cub. Temujin decided that he would ride to the hillside den where he had first found White Tip just to see if he could satisfy himself that the now grown wolf had returned to and was accepted by the pack that his family had hunted last year. He did not tell anyone where he was going. He simply got on his

horse and headed for the distant hills. He did not plan to be gone for long. It was a warm spring day and he didn't even bother wearing a jacket or taking anything with him other than some dried meat and cheese curds in case he got hungry along the way.

As they approached the base of the hill where the den had been located, Temujin's horse suddenly veered as it was about to step into a marmot hole and stumbled awkwardly. The boy was thrown from the horse and was rendered unconscious when he struck his head on a rock. Free of his rider, the uninjured horse turned and headed back to the family's ger, several miles away. Temujin lay there on the hillside and when he regained consciousness he realized he had dislocated his knee falling from the horse. He was in great pain and called for his horse but soon discovered that it was gone. It was now growing late in the afternoon and it was getting colder as the spring sun started to set. He guessed that his horse had headed for home but he knew that when it arrived at the ger without him, his family would have no idea where he was. He also knew that it would be impossible for them to start a search for him in the dark. At that point he started to worry about spending a night alone in the dark and the cold. That fear and the shock of his injury started to run shivers through his body.

Temujin was able to drag himself to a spot that was somewhat sheltered from the wind and he reconciled himself to the fact that he was going to spend a very cold night out in the elements. It crossed his mind that he could die out there in the wilderness. Frightened though he was, he was stoic enough to understand that if Tenger decided that it was time for his spirit to return to the heavens, then such would be the case. At least he would not die hungry. His horse had deserted him, but he still had his supply of dried meat and curds in a small pouch tied to his waist. He nibbled a little to give himself strength and to provide himself with some warmth in the cold evening air. Not long after it got dark, Temujin heard the clatter of some stones and a throaty growl. He turned his head quickly to find himself staring face-to-face with a full grown wolf, its eyes shining in the moonlight. Fear seized the boy and he uttered a sharp cry. At that point he

noticed the white blaze on the wolf's chest and the white end of its tail. White Tip had found him on the hillside!

Temujin held out a piece of dried beef for the wolf and White Tip approached. He gently took the offering from the boy's fingers. Temujin reached up and scratched the wolf behind the ears. White Tip nestled down beside him as he stroked his head and patted his side. The animal stayed with him and curled up to the boy, providing him with warmth in the cool night. It was not long before Temujin dropped off to a peaceful sleep. He awoke when the sun was coming up and was surprised to find White Tip gone. Sometime in the early morning he had left the boy. He had not been gone for long because Temujin still felt the warmth that his sleeping companion had created.

Meanwhile White Tip had crossed the several miles of steppe that separated the hillside and the family ger. As the wolf crept stealthily towards the family encampment, he noticed the humans saddling their horses. It was daybreak and they were preparing to set out in search of the missing Temujin. White Tip stood up and was spotted by the family dogs. The wolf ran back and forth at the edge of the camp and the dogs set up a terrific ruckus. He made a movement to appear like he was running away and then quickly returned. He did this again and again, sending the dogs into a frenzy. Temujin's mother pointed out the wolf to her husband and sons. She instantly understood the message that the wolf was sending, as White Tip made another movement like he was leaving. "It is White Tip!" she cried, "Follow him and he will lead you to Temujin." The three men sprang to their horses and chased after the wolf.

For several miles White Tip stayed ahead of them. They would lose sight of him briefly and then he would reappear behind a rock or on the crest of the next rise. After a time Temujin's father realized that the wolf was leading them to the site of the old den. He shouted to his sons and whipped his horse to make it go faster. Temujin heard the riders approaching and struggled to stand up on his one good leg. Despite the dreadful pain in his dislocated knee and his head, he raised his arms and waved, all the time yelling at the top of his lungs. White Tip was now

nowhere to be seen. Temujin's father spotted him and he and the boy's brothers quickly covered the ground between them. They leaped from their horses and surrounded the injured youngster. His father was never one to show much emotion, but he wept openly when he embraced his son.

They immobilized Temujin's leg before they prepared to transport him back to the ger. The boy excitedly described how White Tip had warmed and comforted him during the cold night and his father explained how the wolf had made his way to the camp and then guided them back to his location. They gently lifted Temujin onto one of the horses and set off for home. As they rode down the hillside, they heard a wolf howl above them. There on the crest of the hill stood White Tip, the white blaze on his chest and his white-tipped tail bright in the morning sun. He raised his head, gave one more howl and then disappeared from view. Temujin raised his arm in a silent farewell.

Bio

Brian Wrixon is a retired business executive who, after serving over 40 years in the financial services industry, now devotes his time to creative endeavor's. In addition to writing and publishing his own poetry and prose works, he has been instrumental in assisting hundreds of young and emerging authors from around the world get published, either personally or as contributors to group anthologies.

Brian is the founder of the almost 1,500 member international writers' group "Poets with Voices Strong". He is a member of the advisory boards of "Writing For Peace" in Colorado USA, and "Express Journal" in Moradabad (U.P.) India. He is a member of the senior editorial board of Bharat College of Commerce and Science in Kulgaon Badlapur, India, and serves on the editorial board of The World Peace Mission in Kankerhera, Meerut (U.P.) India. Brian is also Chair of the Advisory Board of Reflection Magazine and likewise functions as an editor and reviewer for the independent publisher MCI Writer's House. Brian has contributed to several journals, scholarly texts, anthologies and other publications around the globe.

He graduated from Laurentian University in Canada with a degree in Classical Studies, and is a former faculty member, online curriculum design consultant and program coordinator at Mohawk College in Hamilton, Ontario. Along with his lengthy career in the corporate world, he also built a highly successful consulting practice and now provides consultancy services in distribution chain management and strategic planning for small businesses in India on a volunteer basis, through his facilitated planning process “Growth by Design”.

Brian has been married for almost 50 years to Dr. Cheryl Wrixon, an educational consultant, and they are fortunate to live nearby their children and grandchildren. Their extended family includes five children sponsored through Chalice Canada, three in Africa, one in Haiti and one in India.

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