This is my story for storytelling night. I ain't much of a storytelling type of guy, but I'm having a kid soon, and I gotta be able to tell it bedtime stories, so I thought I'd practice. I wasn't really raised with fairytales, I don't know much of the three little pigs type of shit, but I'll give it a shot. One final side note: I don't know shit about dogs. or farms. or coyotes. Anyways.

Once upon a time, there was a dog named Executioner. His brother, Judge, was the sheepdog, and he herded the sheep. Judge's sister, Jury, was the alert dog, and she barked if she saw coyotes or wolves or the like out in the fields. Executioner was the livestock guardian. He protected the flock.

In the mornings, the three dogs would lie together and talk. "I keep the flock for the master, make sure they go in the wrong places, cause they don't know well enough how to keep their own safety" Judge would say. "I watch the fields for danger to protect the flock, I yell if them that wants to eat sheep walk too close to our fields" would say Jury."And I make sure that them that wants to eat the sheep stay hungry." Would finish Executioner.

The three of them would walk through the flocks some days, checking in on all the sheep.

"My lamb's stuck in the fence," Cower would bleat, her big eyes all sad and worried.

"I'll call the master who can pull her out," would say Jury.

"My son don't know how to headbutt, he's a bull but he ain't learning right." Mewl said.

"Lemme teach em." Said Judge.

But they didn't bleat for Executioner. They were all scared of him.

"I don't want them to think I'm gonna bite them." Executioner would say to his siblings as he drank at the watering bucket.

"They don't. But if you can kill a wolf twice your size, ain't nothing stopping you but principles from killing sheep. We all know you won't. But it's scary." Said Judge.

"Even the master don't let me sleep inside." He'd say sadly.

"Now now, he don't let none of us do that, expect when we're hurt." Say Jury.

"I suppose." Executioner would say, and go back to drinking. But he'd think about it still. How could he protect his flock without scaring them? He sometimes wished he'd been born a different type of dog.

It was a heavy summer night when the coyotes came. Jury yelled first.

“Coyotes! Coyotes! Coyotes!”

Executioner was on his paws before the first cry even had time to echo, running out to the fields.

All the sheep bleated in dismay. “What’s got Executioner all riled up?”

“Is it wolves?”

“Stay away from the doors, lambs!”

Out like a flash was he, down the grassy fields through the summer night so clear he didn’t even need his nose to see.

There was Jury, barking at the edge of the field, and Judge by her side.

“Executioner! Good! It’s the coyotes, lots of em.”

Executioner nodded. His siblings huddled back behind him, not the kind of dogs built to fight coyotes.

Executioner barked first. He always barked first. It was always good to let them have the chance. It was many of them all huddled together, making their terrible noises no god respecting animal could call speech.

But no matter how much he barked, they just kept barking back.

“Leave this place before I kill you!”

“One dog against all of us? You’ll be lucky if we don’t eat you too.”

“Can you take them all, Executioner?” Judge was worried.

“Oh yeah.” Executioner said. “It’s my job, ain’t it?”

The first coyote was dead in an instant. Executioner’s jaw ripped through the flesh of its neck like he ripped through the scrap meat in his bowl every morning.

The second skull cracked under his teeth like acorn shells.

Teeth ripped into his side, and he yelped in pain, but shook the jaws out of his side and tore into the coyote’s stomach till he could see the lining.

Two more were on him now. He rolled, snapping wildly at their necks. One, two sets of jaws in his legs. One, two sets of jaws snapped in his own.

The coyotes were big. Executioner was bigger.

Three, four, five more coyotes biting at him. Three, for, five more coyotes dead at his feet.

Executioner was bleeding hot and fast. So many little holes in his sides, so many on his legs, so many places were his fur was ripped into strips.

Coyote on his left. Dead. Coyote on his right. At his neck. Coyote at his neck, dead.

He was breathing heavy now. There was one coyote left.

“My friend, I’ve just killed your flock. You wanna join them or you wanna run?” Executioner asked, though his voice was ragged with teeth marks and not so scary no more with the exhaustion what was bleeding through his every word.

“Well, I ain’t going back alone, dog”

The words were barely even spoke before Executioner grabbed it’s neck in his jaw and squeezed. It popped like coal embers, but the light was gone from the Coyote’s eyes much quicker than a fire died.

It was dark now. Executioner was tired. There was nothing around but coyote corpses and the big moon which didn’t seem so big no more. He could walk back to the barn. But the barn was so far away. The path that he’d ran like the wind just minutes ago was now a hike he thought might take him to the other side. His legs were shaking, and he could hear a gurgling in his own big breaths.

Executioner lay down. No, laying down made it seem like he had any choice in the matter. He sank. He was an old dog. He was a tired dog. He’d done his job, he’d protected his flock. What more was there to be done?

Executioner closed his eyes. He’d never taken so many coyotes in one night. Maybe it was time they took him with them in return.

Something wet was running across his fur. More blood. He really was going, wasn’t he? He’d be no use to the master any more, too beaten to be a good guard dog. Maybe they’d get a new executioner.

It was even wetter now. Wet in places he hadn’t even been bit. Executioner frowned. No. It wasn’t dripping he was feeling. It was licking.

Executioner opened his eyes and saw white. He could smell them now. Mewl, Cower, Scatter, Clove, Bashful, Comfort, even Clove’s lambs, so many more all blending together he couldn’t

smell one from the other. Standing amongst the corpses was his flock, all around him, licking the blood off his wounds.

“Hey now Executioner, you did so well.” Said Mewl.

“Thank you.”

“Yes thank you.”

Thank you. Thank you. A chorus of thanks rose up from the whole flock.

“Y’all shouldn't be out here. It’s dangerous.” Said Executioner, trying to stand.

“Nonsense you old fuck.” Said Grass, one of the oldest sheep in the flock. She had her hoof down on his chest, gentle, but keeping him against the ground. “You take care of the flock, and the flock takes care of you. Now sit your ass down and let us get this blood off, you look downright frightening.”

Executioner lay there till all the blood was licked off his fur.

“I’m sorry I had to kill them all. I hope you don’t think I wanna do that to you. I’d never do that if I didn’t need to do it for you.” Said Executioner.

“Oh Executioner, we know you old ham. You might be the biggest dog in this field, but you’re the sweetest of them all. Ain’t no other dog who trades lives for us.” The sheep baahed. “Now be quiet.”

Once he was clean, the flock lifted him onto their backs, and carried him back to the barn, guided by Judge and Jury.

They lay him down in the hay, and made a sea of wool around him.

“Sleep well, Executioner.” Said the flock. “We’ll watch over you till the morning.”

And Executioner did.

Ok. Maybe Evangeline was right. Maybe that one’s too violent for a baby. Maybe wait till it’s. Like. Two.