

2016 11 14 Llama Meets Llamacorn

Blackie awakened in the predawn shadows of a high mountain meadow.

Everything was different. She quickly scanned the open space and sounded an alarm. No llama answered her call. Her heart pounded. Dread and fear drove her to run in circles. Had wolves or coyotes come in the night? Why hadn't she heard a disturbance or a call for help? Flooded with the panic of isolation, she continued to cry out for the other llamas of her herd. Still no response.

Had her humans taken them away? Why would she be left alone, and in this strange place? The smells were too strong, an odor like cedar crashed upon her senses.

The sun crept above the horizon. She stared as another wave of terror engulfed her. The sun didn't have the familiar yellow cheer. It was instead too large, too orange, and too vibrating to be real.

Had she really not awakened? Did she stand chained by a dream?

A flux of fear drove the contents of her stomach out her mouth.

Part Two

A voice as caustic as the orange sun startled her. "Spitting. You are disgusting."

Blackie couldn't help it, another ball of sputum ejected, this time from deeper within her.

The disdain of her accuser pierced her. "You are a spotted llamacorn."

She drew a ragged breath and then asked, "What is a spotted llamacorn?"

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Blackie closed her eyes, trying to blink away the confusion. Are they saying, unicorn? These animals didn't look anything like the unicorn toys she had seen with children. These appeared to be llamas, but they didn't claim to be, and they certainly didn't act like any llama she had ever met.

Blackie watched as a herd of black animals entered the meadow. She had never seen so many llamas of the same color in one herd. One stood out from the others as though she were royalty. Sun reflected off her luxurious blue-black coat. She drew herself up to her full stature and peered down at Blackie.

In a mocking tone, she repeated the question. "What is a spotted llamacorn?" That is the stupidest question I have *ever* heard. If you don't know, it is only because you don't have the intelligence of a purebred or the good sense to keep silent about your ignorance."

"But how am I going to find out if I don't ask?"

The black creature shuddered. "You will address me as Queen. I'll not tolerate your disrespect."

"I meant no disrespect. I just asked a question."

She shook her regal head, turned her back, and marched out of the meadow into the forest. "We'll see what my human has to say about your intrusion."

Oh, finally some reasonable being. Blackie knew humans; knew how easy it was to persuade them. She didn't speak their language, but she knew how to nuzzle to their shoulder and look at them with doe eyes to get what she wanted.

One of the other black animals shouted, "Get out of here. The master is coming and he won't tolerate a spotted llamacorn grazing in his meadow."

Part Three

“I have no spots. I’m just as black – all over – as you are.”

The other animals exchanged self-righteous glances.

One of them sneered. “Then you’ve been rolling in the dirt to hide your spots.”

Anger shoved its way past her puzzlement. “I don’t roll in the dirt.” And then the queen stepped back into the meadow. She was followed by a human. Blackie heaved a sigh. “Finally.” She cocked her head and peered at him, inviting him to pet her.

He didn’t smile. He stooped down, picked up a rock, and threw it at her! It nearly hit her. “You’re not one of my llamacorns. A throwback could ruin my whole herd.” He bent and picked up another rock.

She bolted and ran from the meadow.

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Part Four

Up into the high mountains Blackie ran. Tears blurred her vision. “Where is my herd? Where are the other llamas? Where are my gentle humans?”

Pain clutched her heart and refused to let go. Nothing made any sense here in this land of orange sun. She called again, though she choked, and it came out more like a sob.

A tender voice drifted to Blackie. “Come here, my dear. Up into the trees. You don’t want to be out in the open. A dragon could see you.”

Blackie entered the deep shadows of the huge cone trees. “What is a…” Did she dare ask?

“A dragon?” The kindly voice answered.

She nodded.

“They are winged creatures.”

“Like birds?”

“Oh, much larger than birds. They sail through the air so silently they can swoop down and snatch a llamacorn right off the ground. They carry it away without any warning.”

There was that word again. Through the trees, Blackie noticed spotted animals. They looked like llamas, not horses. She didn't see a single animal with a horn on its forehead.

Dizziness born of confusion engulfed her. “Forgive me, but what is a llamacorn?”

One of them came out from behind a shrub and spoke. “How is it that you don't recognize your own kind?”

Blackie shook her head. “I'm not like you.”

The llamacorns darted behind cover.

Smelling their fear, she turned to leave. “Am I rejected again?”

“We won't follow you.”

“I didn't ask you to. I was just trying to find my herd. You aren't my herd.”

The voice of a young one pierced Blackie. “Where will you go? You'll be eaten by a dragon for sure.”

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Blackie lowered her head and took steps away from the spotted llamacorns.

Another voice rang out. “Your Black herd is down the mountain where the sun comes up.”

“They don’t want me. Their human threw rocks at me.”

The young voice again, “But you don’t have any spots.”

“We thought they might be trying to lure us out into the open. When the wild game gets scarce, humans hunt llamacorns.”

The little one peered out from behind a tree. “We don’t want to be dragon meat or human meat either.”

“I don’t blame you. Where I came from, they don’t eat llamas.”

“But how do they feed their dragons? If the dragons don’t have spotted llamacorns, they take purebred llamacorns.”

Blackie’s shoulders sagged. “We don’t have dragons either.”

A young male asked, “Without dragons, how does the magic work?”

## Part Six

“I don’t think we have any.”

He shivered. “You *are* from a different place. Are you from over the mountain?”

Blackie shook her head. “My sun is yellow. I miss it. I miss my herd and my human.”

The animals jerked alert. “Human? You have a human?”

“Yes, and he is kind to me. He takes care of me and my herd.”

From far back in the shadows Blackie heard a voice tinged with longing. “How would it be to have a human?”

“Don’t even think about it.”

“You can’t trust humans. You know that.”

And then a young voice, “But if we had one, the dragons wouldn’t eat us. They respect humans.”

“Fear them is more like it.”

Blackie moved in closer. “Why do dragons fear them?”

#### Part Seven

“Humans are poison to dragons.”

A stout russet and gray llamacorn stepped forward. “A drop of human blood could kill a dragon if it got inside.”

A grand old sire halted the conversation. “We don’t have a human. Enough of this talk. You are planting false hopes in the young ones.”

Blackie lowered her gaze. “I’m sorry for you that you don’t know what it’s like to be cared for.”

The old one countered her claim. “Oh, but we do. We take care of ourselves.”

A female with a cria added, “We take care of each other.”

“Well, the humans take care of us, but we take care of them too. It’s a good feeling to get hugs from the little children at the daycare and the smiles of the humans in the old folks’ home. I miss it. I wouldn’t even mind the sticky fingers at the petting zoo.

I'm a llama. I'd give anything to go home. But I don't know where it is or how to get there."

The llamacorns cast sideways glances at each other.

### Part Eight

Finally, one of them spoke. "You said you'd give anything. Are you sure?"

"Yes. Anything."

"There might be a way."

"One way or the other, it would put a stop to the fables," the old one said.

A white llamacorn with russet spots sighed and then swallowed. "I wouldn't want to be in your place."

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The admission of the white and russet llamacorn comforted Blackie. For the first time in this strange place, she felt understood. And so, she allowed a little part of herself to feel she did have a herd, at least for now.

She stood in the center of the group as they discussed the matter.

A brown llamacorn with light gray spots spoke up. "You said you don't have magic, but magic is the only way you could get here."

Another added, "We know where magic comes from."

Blackie felt a surge of excitement. "Can you tell me where to go to get it?"

An old sire coughed. "We wouldn't do that to you."

"Then how am I going to get home?"

They exchanged glances. The white and russet one nodded. “We’ll take you to her.”

“To whom?”

“The dragon dame.”

Blackie gasped. There was that word, dragon. They eat llamacorns. Do they eat llamas?

“We’ll send the most fleet-footed,” the sire said, “except for the nannies with crias. The rest will stay to defend the little ones. Rest now. You’ll need to get to the cave just at twilight.”

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## Part Nine

Excitement prodded Blackie, driving her to pace. Did they truly know how to get her home? Or was it just another disappointment waiting to happen?

A young llamacorn interrupted her thoughts. “Why wouldn’t the Black herd take you? What’s wrong with you?”

“I don’t know. Where I came from it doesn’t matter what color you are or if you’re spotted or not. You’re all part of the same herd.”

“Then how do they tell what clan you are?”

Blackie let out a long sigh. “What are you talking about?”

“Well, it’s easy. If you are dark gray, you are part of the Gray Clan. If you’re brown, you belong with the Brown Clan. All of the light gray llamacorns are Blue Clan.”

“All of the llamacorns in one clan are the same color?”

“A-course.”



Blackie shook her head and muttered under her breath, “How do they manage that?”

The young llamacorns must have heard her. One said as though he were old and wise and Blackie was the young one, “If you have a blue mama and a blue sire, you’re blue.”

Blackie tested the foreign theory, “And the spotted ones...”

An older youth leaned forward with a frown. “Have different colors for dam and sire.”

“I’m sorry,” Blackie admitted. “This is all so new to me. We never know what color our cria will be. It’s impossible to breed for color.”

“That’s too bad,” a female said. “There must be a lot of confusion in your world.”

“Not really. We’re like the spotted llamacorns. From what I can tell, it doesn’t matter whether the spots are gray or white or brown. You’re all one herd.”

“So, you are a spotted llamacorn, after all.”

“Thank goodness.”

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## Part Ten

“You are coming with us, sire?” Blackie heard concern and sadness in the male llamacorn’s voice.

The old one bristled. “Since when do you question my decisions?”

The male lowered his head in submission. Blackie had never seen such a thing in her own herd. Whenever a new stud came to power, he challenged the sire. He never surrendered, and there never was this show of respect for the aged. But here it was.

The ancient one took the lead. “Stay together in a tight group. No one stray or fall behind.”

And then they ran. Together in one body, they galloped up into the mountains higher and higher. They stopped at streams to drink and rest, but they never lost the tight formation and Blackie realized that she was always at the center of the herd.

“Do you know where we’re going?” Blackie asked.

“Yes,” came the reply, “to one with great magical power. She’ll know how to get you home. Now, be silent.”

Blackie wondered who “she” was, but it would have to wait.

## Part Eleven

“Meadow coming. It’s not quite sunset, so we may be challenged. Keep going except at my command. Migration formation. Go.”

The same female who first invited Blackie informed her of the changes. “It’s like the formation of flying geese, dear.”

“Thanks.”

They burst into the meadow at full gallop and raced toward the stand of trees across the way, but before they reached the cover, a shadow fell across them.

The old one commanded, “You know what to do.”

“Is that the powerful magic creature?” Blackie wheezed.

The animal beside her barked, “No. It’s Orak.”

The llamacorns stopped. Blackie nearly collided with those in front of her.

## Part Twelve

Those in the rear whipped around and backed together to form a huddle so tight she could scarcely breathe. Blackie faced the old sire.

Looking up for the shadow maker, Blackie saw a creature *as dark as evil*. Its body was the length of a tall tree and its bat-like wings spread out just as wide as it was long. It dove toward the herd extending arms with talons flared.

“Stay together.” the sire shouted. “Heads down.”

Blackie ducked. She heard the clash of those razor talons above her. They surely would have snatched her if she hadn’t heeded the warning. The creature circled. The wing brushed the backs of the llamacorns. Blackie felt their fear; felt their instinct to bolt and answered with silent terror of her own. But at the same time, she felt the strained compliance to the old one’s command and stood her ground with her herd.

## Part Thirteen

“The dragon,” one whispered. And Blackie understood then for the first time the magnitude of the danger. But this was not a female.

He landed in front of the llamacorn sire. *“You brought me an offering.”*

The old one stepped forward away from the herd.

“No.” Blackie shouted. She realized why the old sire came, but this was her herd and she would defend it no matter the cost.

The sputum erupted from so deep within her that it carried blood. It flew into the dragon’s eye. “A gift from my human!” She shouted.

Orak's roar exploded sending a shock wave over the land that made the ground quake and the trees shudder as though they would uproot. "*Human blood!*" He screamed as he launched into the air and disappeared.

#### Part Fourteen

Blackie peered at the place of his departure. In the space of his evacuation, a window opened. Through it, she saw her herd of llamas grazing in their field while the yellow sun sank behind the hills of Blackie's native land.

"I don't understand," Blackie admitted. "You were taking me to a female like *him?*"

"We're taking you at twilight. She won't be hunting then."

"She's the only one with enough magic. She might be able to help you. We really don't know, but you said you'd give anything to go home."

"And you were willing," Blackie admitted, "to take the risk to get me there."

"We take care of each other." The old one said. "It won't be long until I face the dragon again. And then you won't interfere."

"At least I won't be the cause of it. I didn't know what a risk you were taking until he came. Well, I guess we don't need a dragon dame. Look through that opening. There is my home. It's just like I told you, with the yellow sun."

"You could stay with us, dear. You have proven yourself."

"The blood was my own. There was no magic in it. He will learn that soon enough. If I stay, I will only endanger you further. And I think I would complicate

things here. The human with the black llamacorns said I was a throwback. My descendants would destroy the order of things here.”

Blackie thought of the sticky fingers at the petting zoo. “I have my own challenges and people who need me.”

She stepped into her pasture and then turned to see the spotted llamacorns gazing at her. The opening faded.

Blackie’s gut hurt from the force of the expulsion. “I hope I never spit that hard again.”