

## How I Met Your Father

by

*Dead Bite*

In the darkening distance the eagle cawed, just loud enough to be a whisper to the herd of horses settling down as the night took toll on the day. Spirit took another look around the herd, making sure nothing was wrong with it. Every thing was quiet. "Perfect" Thought Esperenza, who looked at Spirit watching Rain fall asleep peacefully. The palomino mare walked slowly to her son and beckoned him to the hill. "Spirit, I want to tell you something.." Spirit was silent. "About your..Father.." The words came out of her mouth slowly, sadly. Spirit looked startled but comforted his mother. "Tell me more, Please." Spirit said quietly as Esperenza looked into the sky, hazel eyes flickering with the appearing stars. "Before you was born I lived in a different herd. I lived there until I was 3 years of age. That's where I met him." She sighed again. "But there's so much more to it." She shuffled on her feet, then lay down, Spirit craning his neck. "I was young, he was young. A handsome colt he was. His name was Strider." Spirit listened "I've heard him somewhere before..Wait..little creek said something about a stallion called Strider, a black one. He said I looked just like him..." Esperenza continued. "The lead stallion, was forcing him out of the herd as he asked me to be his mate. I gladly accepted and once he went, I waited till midnight until I left to find him and start our own herd." She smiled then looked up at Spirit. "Would he love to see you know..." She said under her breath, Spirit didn't notice, he just processed the story so far. "We grew here, learning our boundaries...A few years after we moved here I fell pregnant. With you. I was vulnerable, but instead of ignoring me and focusing on the mares, he let the mares go and watched over me. The next few months, a cougar made its attacks focused on me, Strider pushing them back to the den before returning, no marks on him whatsoever. But then, four cougars came at once, trying to kill me. Strider didn't give them a chance, he just pushed them all back until they latched onto him. No one would help him at all. They didn't even notice. He had galloped away, but he never came back..." Esperenza was almost in tears, Spirit stunned by the story of his magnificent father Strider.

Hours later when dawn broke, the song birds woke Spirit up. He was stood on the same hill as last night, but Esperenza was gone. Spirit panicked, but saw that Rain was safe, but that didn't put a

rest to it. There was a large stallion, dark as night with hairs starting to go grey. Spirit looked around and saw Esperenza next to him. What was she doing? Spirit raced up to him, about to challenge him to fight when he saw a glint in his eye, a smile across his face. The twinkle like those of a father when he saw his child for the first time. Strider was home. "Son..?" He said, Spirit feeling slightly dizzy. He had marks all over him. Probably from the cougars. "Da-dad?" The words didn't seem right to him. "Dad?" Esperenza nodded. "Yes, Spirit. This is your father. This is Strider." Spirit lit up, looking back on the herd, but a great grin was on his face. "There's so much I want to ask you!" Spirit was practically bouncing in front of his father. "But that will have to wait till sun down. I have jobs to do." Spirit looked dead serious, but Strider nodded and said to Esperenza. "Wise choice." He said to Spirit more clearly. "Good Choice, my son. I will see you at sundown near the Mesa." Spirit nodded then left his parents to check on the herd. Rain was awake, and glaring at the black stallion. "Whos that?" she asked. "Its Strider. My father." Rain smiled.

The day was almost over, and Spirit had almost forgotten about the deal he made with his father until Esperenza whinnied to him that Strider had gone to the mesa early to check on Eagle. Spirit smiled thankfully then cantered to the mesa where his father was stood, talking to the eagle perched on a piece of rickety fence. "I thought I saw you earlier!" The eagle smiled then cawed happily, seeing his old friend's grin. "I thought I heard you at the calvary base!" The pair didn't realise Spirit was at the other side of the mesa, and he could hear everything. "My father? At the calvary base..?" Spirit had a sudden image of a strong looking ebony stallion starting to grey. He then realised who this was. No matter how hard it was, Spirit didn't let it get to him, galloping to the other side of mesa and greeted the eagle and his father politely.

Half an hour later the eagle said he had a nest to tend to and flew away, leaving the two to chat. "You..you were at the calvary base..?" Spirit said slowly. "Yes, so were you, weren't you." He smiled then nudged his colt. You put up a great fight then, the colonel knew he had no chance.. Strider sighed. "Spirit..Your mother is..ill..Very ill and I need you to know that she may not be here for a while, so I'm going to stay here and look after her. If she goes, please let me go with her." Spirit didn't know what he was hearing. "You..you want me to kill you?" Spirit was appalled. "But..That's betrayal!" Strider sighed "I'm old, she's old. We're bound to go soon. Just let me know you'll look over your mares, and keep Rain safe, and keep her by your side always." Spirit nodded, tear stains down his cheeks.....

TO BE CONTINUED