

The Strange Visitor Part 1

by

MW Roach

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High Commander's Log:

"I have successfully landed on the small blue planet known as Earth and have taken on the fleshy form of the dominant species. Aside from the odd hairy growth coming out of my rear-end, I think I have made the transformation quite well. As of right now, I'm still growing accustomed to the strange matter of walking with only four legs. I have no idea how these earth-creatures manage it. I'm currently in search of a family group that I can join and observe. I'm positive that I can infiltrate one without any difficulties. Aside from a very insulting squirrel, I've yet to meet any real intelligent life on this planet..."

A calm breeze swayed the grass along the valley floor. With the exception of a few chirping birds, the distant trickle of the river and a few mares munching quietly on some clover, all was peaceful. The sun shone brightly in the cloudless sky and rained its hot rays down upon all the inhabitants of the Cimarron. It was high-noon, and almost everyone was asleep in the tall grasses. A buckskin stallion on a small mound overlooking the paradise opened his jaws wide with a lazy yawn.

Everything was so still and hushed that the stallion himself had grown sleepy. He pawed at the earth a few times before sinking to his knees and bringing down the rest of his large, muscular body. The ground was cool on his skin. He lowered his head until his muzzle was pressed against the sweet-smelling earth and closed his eyes.

Just as he was drifting off, his ear flicked at the sound of approaching hooves. He wearily opened his eyes and looked over his shoulder. A pinto-marked mare was trotting towards him, her flanks bouncing gently with her stride. The buckskin remained in his comfortable spot, but smiled warmly as she halted at the base of the mound.

"Good afternoon, Rain." He yawned. "Care to join me for a nap?"

It was then that he noticed that Rain was wide-eyed and very alert. She swished her tail uneasily.

"Spirit..." She said almost breathlessly. "There's...something that you need to see."

Spirit lifted his head and perked up his ears.

"Must I see it now? I'm really quite tired. Perhaps after a short nap..."

"No." Rain interrupted him. "It's rather urgent."

"Is there a foal in trouble?" Spirit inquired.

"No." Rain answered.

"Is my mother in trouble?" He asked.

"No. She's fine."

Spirit chuckled lightly.

"Well, for goodness sake, Rain! What on earth is so urgent that I must see to it now?"

Rain swallowed and swung her head.

"It's...another stallion."

Spirit's eyes grew large. He was on his feet immediately.

"A challenger?!" He asked, sounding rather annoyed.

"Well..." Rain looked away with uncertainty. "Not exactly."

Spirit was confused now. No stallion would enter the territory of another stallion unless it was to steal mares.

"I don't understand. Tell me exactly what's going on."

"A stallion has come to the herd. He's looking for you. He says...he says he wants to speak with you."

Spirit raised a curious brow. "Speak...with me?" He tossed his head in bewilderment. "This makes no sense! Who is this stranger?"

Rain backed away and turned. "I'm not sure. But you had better come see him. He's...very, very unusual." With that, she cantered away.

Spirit snorted with agitation and followed. Whoever this stranger was, he was in for a real thrashing for interrupting Spirit's nap!

Spirit and Rain cantered side by side now, the stallion's mind was racing with questions. What stallion in his right mind would want to stop and chat with a herd-leader? Perhaps Rain was mistaken and the horse was really a gelding? But what if it was a stallion? What if it was a trap?

Spirit pinned his ears and urged Rain to go faster. He was eager to see what this was all about.

The two flew over a ridge and the horse in question came into view. Spirit nearly tripped over his own hooves at the sight of him.

The stallion--and he was indeed a stallion-- was tall; at least 17 hands. He was well-built and had strong legs. Even more curious than his unusual size was his even more unusual markings! His base coat was a light grey; but those markings...the stallion sported swirls of black spirals around his shoulders and flanks. Irregular black stripes and freckles occupied his legs and back. His face was black with thick black bars on each jowl. Lining each marking was a strip of brilliant copper that shone like gold in the river. The stallion's eyes matched these copper strips. His mane and tail were silver and the tips were dipped in black while copper hairs danced teasingly in the sun. The stallion held his tail unusually high and to the side.

Spirit approached the stallion and sized him up. With an arched neck, Spirit pressed his face and muzzle against that of the stranger's.

"Who are you?" Spirit asked with a snort as he blew into the stranger's nostrils.

The stallion had an odd look in his eyes. He seemed so...new. It also seemed that he had no idea what Spirit was doing.

Finally, the stranger spoke.

"Is this...normal? You're standing quite close to me...our faces are touching. Is this a greeting?"

With a squeal, Spirit jumped back. His vocalization caused the stranger to jump too. Suddenly, the stranger smiled dumbly.

"What a unique greeting! Here, let me try..."

The stranger pressed his face into Spirit's, squealed and jumped back. The odd horse seemed delighted.

"That was fun! Let's try again..."

"Hold on!" Spirit snapped as he struck out with his front hoof. "That wasn't a greeting! It was a challenge!"

"Ah...well, in that case, I cheerfully withdraw." The stranger stood tall and proud. "Now then...are you the High Commander of this family unit?"

Spirit flicked his ear in confusion. "What? Do you mean, am I the leader of this herd?"

The stranger looked nervously about. "Uh...yeah...I think everyone knew what I meant. Well, are you?"

"Yes." Spirit said between gritted teeth. "I am Spirit."

"Perfect. It's a pleasure to meet you, sir. I am Quazaar."

Spirit tilted his head. "Kway-zar?" He pronounced it slowly. "What an odd name."

Again, the stranger appeared uneasy. "It is? How about 'Scruffy' or 'Peaches'? Would that be less unusual?"

Spirit shook his head. "Who the heck ARE you? And what do you want?"

Quazaar took a deep breath and began. "I'm a well-learned stallion with a vast knowledge of the Universe. I teach Physics to yearlings and two-year olds. I have come to ask permission to join this family uni...uh...this herd."

The only thing Spirit understood was the last part.

"You want to...JOIN my herd?"

"I do. I am a model educator and I think you'll find that your youngsters will look up to me for guidance and cherish me for my incomperable brilliance. " The stallion stood as though he were in a show. His face and posture was brimming with self-gloryfication.

Spirit didn't like his attitude at all.

"Do you realize how unnatural it is for a stallion of your size and strength to want to join a herd rather than take one for yourself?" Spirit inquired with pinned ears.

Quazaar grinned. "Then I guess you consider yourself to be one lucky fellow! With me in your herd, your rivals will quiver at my cranial prowess. Lesser horses will bow to you in envy as I bestride your herd like an intellectual colossus! I will..."

"I don't need you in my herd." Spirit barked coldly, interrupting Quazaar's speech. "Why don't you go join a bachelor herd?"

Quazaar lowered his proud head. "But...but I MUST join a family group! How can I observe mares and foals and a stallion's relationship with his herd if I join a herd made up entirely of males? I won't learn anything from that! Please, I beseech you...let me join your herd. I promise I won't mess anything up."

Spirit and Rain exchanged confused glances. Aside from understanding only about 20% of Quazaar's words, they didn't understand his need to observe the herd. Finally, Rain spoke up.

"Where are you from?"

Quazaar looked away uneasily, as if trying to search for the answer.

"I'm guessing, not from around here?" Rain finished.

"Why, no..." Quazaar answered confidently. "I guess you can say I'm...not a local." He bit his lower lip in attempt to suppress a laugh.

"Do you come from a land of two-leggeds?" Rain quizzed.

Quazaar suddenly looked at them, now he was the one who was confused.

"Two-leggeds?"

"Yes." Spirit picked up the conversation. "You know, tall, hairless creatures, flat faces, walk on two-legs?"

Suddenly Quazaar nodded. "OH! You mean humans!" He ended with a hearty laugh. "Yes, yes...I come from a place with many, many humans. I owned hundreds. But, I released them all into the wild when I had enough of cleaning after them. They just make their droppings any old place, filthy creatures..."

Again, Spirit and Rain found each other's bewildered gazes. Clearly this horse was far more unusual they they thought.

"So..." Rain continued. "You've never lived with other horses, then?"

Quazaar shook his head. "Nope! I am a blank slate! Ready to learn from you all I can possibly memorize--and that's a lot--and in exchange, I shall teach your youngsters all I know about the universe."

Spirit sighed, eyeing the stallion with uncertainty. It was highly unnatural to allow a full grown stallion to join the herd, for obvious reasons. But Quazaar seemed so clueless and harmless. With a weary eye-roll, Spirit nodded.

"Fine. You can join my herd. BUT, you can NOT breed with any of my mares."

"Oh please!" Quazaar laughed. "I wouldn't dream of it! I've hardly conquered trotting; let alone breeding!"

"Well, keep it in mind!" Spirit snapped. "All of these mares belong to me. You are not allowed to breed with ANY mares in my herd. Do you understand that?"

"I understand perfectly! Thank you, Spirit, you shall not regret this!"

"Oh...I think I will." Spirit said with a chuckle. "Well, come on, then."

With that, Spirit and Rain turned and led Quazaar toward the herd. Rain leaned over to Spirit and whispered.

"I hope he's not dangerous."

Suddenly, Quazaar shouted from behind them, "Hey! You guys have long, bushy things coming out of your butts, too! OUTSTANDING!"

Spirit shook his head and laughed. "I have a feeling he's not."

High Commander's Log:

"I have successfully infiltrated a Family Unit, also known as a 'herd'. The leader came off a bit abbrasive at first, but I think I won him over with my charm and dashing good looks. I believe his mate has a thing for me which she hides under a layer of low-key hostility. Although I can't blame her for finding me attractive; I am gorgeous, after all. The only important rule in this family unit is that I am not allowed to mate with any of the stallion's mares. This will be a simple task...since he said nothing about me going out and finding my OWN mare..."