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## I Hate these Wild Horses

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His four, small legs pounded and slipped through the snow, rocks and ice. He was losing her, he couldn't keep up. Through the blowing snow and the roaring sound from above she kept running and running as fast as she could.

With the distance between them beginning to grow he could feel the panic of separation building in his young chest.

His mother would dodge to the left then run to the right attempting to shake the pursuing horror from above. He knew she was trying to lead the terror from the skies away from him but he wanted and needed to be with her; he had never been this afraid in his entire young life.

His nostrils flared and his lungs burned as he gulped down the frigid air while attempting to maintain his footing down the icy mountainside.

He did not know where the giant, thumping creature had come from but his mother knew enough to run and he followed her as the beast from the clouds roared and screamed over their heads.

His vision was obscured with the whirling white snow beating him in the face and stinging his eyes. He could no longer hear his mother over the screeching wings above him.

The noise increased, the snow swirled quicker and in his state of visual deprivation and sensory overload he just stopped; he locked up his knees and skidded to a clumsy halt on the slick, slopping ground.

As quickly as it had come, the dark, sinister monster in the sky sped away while the snow stopped it's frantic dance and gently settled back onto the, now, quiet ground.

He shook his head, not just in an effort to clear his mind but also to shake the settled snow from his face and mane.

Where was his mother?

As the snow settled he could now see down the slope and realized that he had stopped just short of a steep drop off; yet his proud, dark mother was nowhere to be seen.

With his nose to the ground, ears alert and eyes peering forward he slowly followed her scent the few feet to the edge of the cliff. The depth of the drop off startled him so he scooted backwards out of fear but not before he caught a glimpse of a familiar figure far below.

He took in a breath of winter air and edged forward until he could just peek over the edge and there, far below him, lay the crumpled, still form of what had once been his mother.

He screamed, he slipped, he scurried back as the cold darkness of fear, dread and loss overtook him.

His mother was gone.



“Condor to Eagle’s Nest, Condor to Eagle’s Nest, come in Eagle’s Nest”, barked the helicopter pilot as he headed his chopper on a southerly heading only about 200 ft off the valley floor.

“Go ahead Condor this is Eagle’s Nest” came crackling back over his headphones.

“Looks like I lost another one; oh rats”, laughed the pilot.

“Are you doing that on purpose?” asked the voice in the headphones, “That’s the seventh one today”

“Not really, but if you are keeping score you may as well call it eight as she had a foal and he ain’t gonna be able to make the night without his mama, do I get extra points for that?”

“Naw, but we still have a lot of work to do and a bunch more of those bastards to roundup so you better get back after it.”

“It is what it is when you do this crap in the winter. Any of those tree hugging protesters over there today?”

“Nope, guess it is too cold or they just plain gave up. They might have finally realized that they aren’t going to win, that we are going to take them all.”

“Bunch of candy-assed pussies, not worth the powder to blow them from here to hell.”

“Roger that, but this is a no- name herd that won’t draw much publicity, not like there is some TV show made about them or anything so they probably just went back and crawled into their books and their magical fairyland.”

“Let em go, good place for um.”

“Say, you know you are about working yourself out of a job up there, don’t you?”

“How’s that?”

“We’ve almost got all these useless wild horses cleared off the land so what are you planning to do next?”

“Maybe I will learn how to herd the cattle that you plan to place out here.”

The voice in the pilot’s headphones laughed, “Yea, in your dreams.”

“Probably so, ya gotta love your job to be able to survive.”

“It’s my turn to ask ‘How’s that?’”

“Because I love my job, maybe too much, cause I hate these wild horses”

“Roger that, me too. So earn your dammed, inflated day rate and go get us some of those bastard wild horses.”

“Will do, but you’re buying the beer tonight.”

“Affirmative Condor, now get to work.”

“Condor out and gunning for more!”

With that the helicopter pilot twisted the collective and pulled his stick hard to the right. The chopper smartly curved towards the mountains to the west and in only a matter of moments the pilot could make out several dark and tan shapes against the snow on the lower slopes.

Like a World War I bi-plane the helicopter went into a steep dive, aiming directly at the innocent, wild horses below. As the aircraft fell upon the startled horses the pilot imagined that he had gun sights on his windscreen and keyed his transmission button like it was a

machine gun trigger. “Take that, and that you bloody bastards, you’re all dead anyway”, he laughed as he pulled back his stick to make another pass at the terrified animals below. He wanted to drive them down the slope and to the east and then run them down the valley to the trap in the south.

He came at them down the slope from above as the band stallion deftly turned to the north with his herd following close behind. The pilot lowered his aircraft to just inches over the panicked horses and he would have heard them screaming over the beating of his own blades if he were not growling through clenched teeth, “I hate these wild horses!!!”