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Costa Rica Raccoons

By: Eero Vernallis

In a time long ago, otherwise known as May of 1998, in a land far away, our story unfolds on an island off the coast of Costa Rica. Deep in an unknown rainforest, a female raccoon is giving birth to a small pack of kits. Next to her is her mate, Jorg. Jorg was one of the larger raccoons in the area, maybe 18 pounds. You could tell that he has had a hard life because he has scars all over his body. From face scars to tail scars, some deep, some small. His fur was unusual yet beautiful, a mix of gray-orange, with hints of red.

Jorg's mate, Criste, was a lot smaller than Jorg and, her fur was regular black and gray. Unlike Jorg, she had no scars anywhere on her, and she had been alive for around one to one and a half years. Even though she was just an ordinary raccoon, to Jorg she was the most beautiful raccoon he had ever seen. So beautiful that they had a previous litter of kits just last year. The litter consisted of two kits, one a female, and one a male. Both had fur like their mother, and both were average sizes. The male was named Uper, and the female was named Fritz.

Contrary to popular belief raccoons have their own language, many different tribes have different ways to speak; Jorg's family spoke an old forgotten human language called Tquaqe. Most raccoons speak this language on the islands of Costa Rica; think of it as a common language. Since raccoons were able to communicate with each other, early generations of tribal raccoons began making progress toward intelligence, such as stone tools, agriculture, religion, and starting to make small villages.

Sadly, most of these early-intelligent raccoons got killed off by tigers, bears, and the more intelligent humans. Now only descendants of the great raccoon's rummage through the forests with most having close to no intelligence at all. But, there are rumors of intelligent raccoons all throughout Costa Rica.

It seemed Jorg had some of that intelligence, because he wouldn't sleep out in the open as other raccoons did. Instead, he found a hollowed-out tree and started adding decorations and furniture. Inside there were multiple beds made out of leaves, and a water hole with rocks holding in the water. To keep the hollowed-out tree lit up, there are small lamps made out of soda cans and animal fat -- Even a rock circle campfire. There was a singular entrance that was a medium-sized hole, big enough for a raccoon, not big enough for predators.

Back to Criste and her labor situation, she had given birth to one of the kits but there are still more kits coming.

“Arghhhhh!” screamed Criste, still laboring.

“Why does it hurt so much Jorg?!”

“Don't ask me; I haven't done this before. But it will be over soon,” Says Jorg trying to console his mate.

Jorg was right; only 50 minutes later it was done. Criste had been in labor for a total of 3 hours. Currently, she has passed out from exhaustion. Two kits had been born; the first one was named Cold for her cold black eyes. Cold was below average with her weight being about 75 grams. Her eyes and ears were closed; she was practically sleeping, as a newborn kit should. Her fur was like her mother's and siblings', gray and black. The second kit was named Yoa because Yoa means “different” in Tquaq. His name fit because he was about half a pound in weight, or in other words 200 grams. His fur was also different; instead of it being like his sibling's or mother's, it was like his father's, with a beautiful red and orange swirl.

“Dad he has your fur!” exclaims Uper in disbelief. Jorg is stunned to see his son with fur just like his. At first glance, you may think Yoa had been alive for weeks, if not months. He immediately opened his eyes and his ears flopped open.

“What the heck?” Fritz says surprised. “His eyes shouldn't be open for a couple more weeks, right Dad?”

“Y-yeah, that's weird. I need to step outside for a little bit,” says Jorg as he scurries outside.

The wind outside is violent and freezing; Jorg was not cold, nevertheless, he got the chills. “It's finally happening, the prophecy was correct,” mumbled Jorg to himself. “And to think that I thought I was one of the last ones. Guess I was wrong, haha. Now it's time to rai-,” Jorg cuts off as he hears something in the distance.

“Hello?” Jorg yells out with a tremble in his voice. “Is someone there?!” Jorg can sense movement in the surrounding area.

“Maybe it's just a squirrel,” says Jorg, trying to convince himself. There are multiple bushes and ferns rustling in the area around Jorg, but he cannot tell if it's just wind or if something is there.

Back inside the hollowed-out tree trunk, Yoa had started crawling just moments after being born; he hadn't even been fed yet, while Criste and Cold had both passed out from exhaustion. His older siblings started to figure out why their new sibling was so active already.

“I don't like his fur; it's too colorful,” says Uper with suspicion, as he watches his new sibling crawl around.

“I like it personally. I had always hoped I had Dad's fur,” argues Fritz back to her sibling.

“But isn’t it strange how active he is? I mean he’s walking around five minutes after being born; that isn’t normal,” says Uper.

“Well,” Fritz pauses. “Yes, I suppose that is strange but there must be a reasonable explanation for it.”

“If you have an explanation, I’d love to hear it,” asks Uper.

“I don’t know why, but we should ask dad if he knows,” says Fritz as she watches her new younger brother walk around after just being born.

Outside, the wind was so violent and angry during the cold night that it was practically impossible to figure out if you were being watched, except for the fact that when Joa sensed danger the hairs on his back would spike up, and now they were as spiky as a hedgehog. In Joa’s life, he had fought many things, with his first thing being his own sibling’s back when he was just a cub.

Although his siblings were older, larger, and more athletic, he would almost always win against them, why you may ask? Jorg was fast. He used this speed to hunt many animals, from rodents to young crocodiles. Fighting these animals made the hairs on his back go up, but not nearly as much as what was in the bushes. Whatever was in the bushes was big, really big.

Out of the corner of Jorg’s eye, he could see a big black mass approaching him from the right. It was a bear, not a normal bear, a massive bear. Imagine if two bears combined into one big bear, then that would be this bear. His fur was bloody and the darkest black Jorg had ever seen. So dark that except for his white eyes, and blood on his fur, he was invisible. It was more than 10 times Jorge's size and almost as big as the hollowed-out tree trunk.

The bear had more scars than Jorg could even imagine having on one body. The bear's eyes had a deep cut inside them; both eyes were a blank white. Even though the bear was only ten feet in front of Jorg, the bear couldn't see him, but he could smell him.

“Damn, this is bad,” Jorg whispers to himself.

Quickly, he thought of two options. One, run away and save himself. Two, fight the bear and potentially save his family but likely die trying. Both options had risks he didn’t want to take. If Jorg could, he would want to think about these options for hours. He didn’t have hours, more like seconds. With the scent of newborn animals in the air, the bear kept getting closer and closer. With each step the bear took forward, Jorg took one step backward. Jorg was only a few steps away from his makeshift house when the bear got a good whiff of baby raccoon and pounced. With great speed the bear jumped forward and slammed into the tree, making it tremble and shake. Jorg runs for the opening of the tree trunk, which was about ten feet in front of the bear. Jorg makes it to right in front of the entrance; it is being blocked by the bear's massive legs.

Jorg knows his best option is to wait until the bear moves, yet he makes an irrational decision, biting the bear's lower calf. Jorg with his sharp teeth makes a deep cut, but the bear does not make any sound. Instead, he shakes his leg with such force that Jorg flies a few feet away; Jorg lands on a sharp rock outside, making his shoulder bleed slightly. Just this little bit of blood is enough for the bear to pick up Jorg's scent; now Jorg is truly terrified. The bear turns his head with a sinister look, for a bear at least. Jorg takes this chance to run for the entrance. Fueled with adrenaline, Jorg sprints with all fours running right past the bear's foot, which was blocking the door. But just as Jorg felt the warmth from inside his house, the bear moved his leg more in front of the entrance. Jorg, who was going so fast, slams directly into the bear's leg just as fast; Jorg can feel blood coming from his head. Dazed and confused, Jorg stumbles toward the light, when he suddenly gets pulled into the house.

"Dad, your bleeding! What happened?" asks Uper as he pulls his bloody father next to him.

"Everyone be quiet," Jorg whispers to his family. "There's a bear, a big bear, bigger than I've ever seen before," Jorg says with a worried look on his face.

"What?!" yelps Fritz. "Quiet down! I believe the bear is blind but has an excellent sense of hearing," Jorg says.

"Get away from the entrance right now," Jorg says cautiously.

Both siblings step away from the entrance, except for Yoa, who is curious about what's outside of this strange building he's in. He slowly crawls toward the entrance, getting about two feet from the entrance before his father pulls him aside. Strangely, the bear had gone silent, no steps, no breathing, no smell of blood -- almost as if the bear had disappeared.

"Maybe because we were so quiet, it left?" asks Fritz.

"Yeah, I think so--" Jorg gets interrupted by loud booms on the ground, making it shake. Then all of the sudden there's a big crash. Joa looks behind him to see that the bear had crashed through the tree trunk.

No one makes a sound, not Jorg, not the siblings, not even the bear. The only sound was the bear's deep, scary breathing. With all the commotion. Cold had woken up.

"AHHHH!" Screams, the infant after being woken up.

Instantly, the bear rushes toward the infant and her mother and jumps on top of them both, crushing them to death.

"MOM!" screams Uper.

The bear instantly runs at Uper. Unlike his mother and new sibling, Uper was faster and more awake. He ducked before the bear could get to him.

The bear crashes into another side of the tree trunk house, getting stuck. Uper seizing the opportunity to strike, pounces on the stuck bear, sinking his teeth into its giant legs. Fritz joins him, scratching and biting all around the bear's legs.

“ROARRRR,” screams the bear in agony.

Jorg, terrified from seeing his wife, and newborn die just a few feet in front of him, is frozen in fear with Yoa in his arms.

“Ewww his blood tastes terrible,” says Fritz, disgusted as she spits out the bear's blood. “Keep biting his legs; he won't be able to walk!” says Uper to Fritz.

As the siblings have their teeth inside the bear's leg, the bear gets free, and falls backward onto the siblings, crushing Uper, and breaking Fritz's legs.

“AHHHH, DAD HELP!” screams Fritz to her father.

It was too late though, as she said the last word, the bear had already turned around and was facing Fritz. The bear sinks his sharp teeth into Fritz, throwing her up into the air. Fritz falls into the bear's mouth and gets swallowed in one bite. Jorg is frozen in sadness, fear, pain, and grief. What was once a happy family of six turned into a family of two in minutes.

“I'm gonna kill you goddamnit,” whispered Jorg to himself. Jorg puts Yoa down on the ground and starts speaking to himself.

“তষণবহন” Yells Jorg at the bear.

Suddenly, Jorg explodes into a colorful mess of feathers and fur. In the middle of these feathers looks like a large tiger. This tiger had the same color fur as Jorg. In fact, the tiger had the same scars as Jorg. The tiger launches itself at the bear, biting and scratching its fur. Yoa, (who is terrified of everything he is experiencing), starts to crawl away from the fight.

“Run my child! Continue the prophecy!” yells the tiger to the young raccoon crawling away.

Yoa looks at the cold, dark, windy forest and the bloodbath he could've once called his home. Multiple tears go down Yoa's furry cheeks.

Both the bear and the tiger have many deep cuts on both of their bodies from each other's attacks. The tiger, who is gravely tired, stops for a few seconds to catch his breath. Unfortunately, a few seconds is all the bear needs to strike. The bear lunges at the tiger's neck; but as soon as the bear moves, the tiger mutters some words in the same language Jorg did moments ago.

“তষণ.” Then as the tiger muttered the last word, it turned into a turtle.

The bear's teeth crashed into the turtle's hard shell, shattering them.

“ROOOOARRR!” screams the bear writhing in pain.

Yoa, a step or two away from entering the dark forest, looks at the massacre behind him. He turned and ran into the thick forest while roars and screeches unfold just feet away. Yoa had started his life with the ending of most of his family's lives. He does not understand what has happened to his family. All he knows is that he is

alone, cold, hungry, and terrified. With these series of devastating deaths of his family members while trying to protect Yoa; he had learned the most important lesson of all, that family comes first.

