

A Llama for Luis

Luis was dreaming of white llamas when his grandmother woke him.

“Si, ‘Litta’”, he answered. “I am awake”.

‘Llamas as white as the eternal snows of the mountains of Bolivia . . .’

Quickly, Luis dressed in the early frosty morning – American sweater and the soft knit hat his mother had woven for him from llama wool. He could hear his mother moving quietly across the dirt floors. His little sister was sleeping.

Luis went with his grandmother out into the chilly dawn. Cold winds flapped ‘Litta’s colorful skirts. She wrapped her shawl tightly around her and gathered sticks of firewood.

“Vaya con Dios, Luis”, she said softly as she returned to the mud hut.

“Yes”, Luis thought. *Go with God.*

This was his first day to take the llamas out alone.

The llamas in their night corral were looking at him, curiously. Luis checked on ‘Bella’, the prized white female llama of the small herd. She was due to give birth soon. The new ‘chia’ would belong to Luis. The first llama of his

dreams. The flock of eight llamas followed Luis out of the pen as they began their daily trek into the grazing fields.

Luis' father and three brothers were already at work in the city. His father did not want to leave his llamas, but times were hard. Luis' three brothers were happy to be free of the labors of caring for llamas. Only Luis was left to carry on the generations of llama shepherds from their ancestors, the Inca Indians of long ago.

Soon, the family would shear the llamas. Luis' mother would make clothes and blankets. They would sell the other wool at the market for thread. But 'synthetic' wool was cheaper for people to buy. Real llama wool was bringing less money.

By midday, the sun was scorching the plains. Luis watched for foxes and stray dogs. Alone in the shadow of the great mountains, Luis thought about 'la chia', the baby llama, his hope for the future.

Evening fell and Luis brought the llamas back into the pen for the night. The baby came early that night, a strong white female. Luis watched as she struggled to her thin legs and stood to find the milk of her mother. His dreams were coming true. He would grow his flock to cover the whole valley

around his village. His father would come home and once again live on the land he loved.

People would come to Bolivia from all over the world. They would marvel at the llamas of Luis Juan- Carlos Alvarez, breeder of the finest white llamas in all of South America!

And, that is exactly what he did.

THE END



Did You Know?

- The Llama is the national symbol of Bolivia, South America
- It is in the camel family, with alpacas, guanacos, and vicunas
- They are gentle, but will hiss, kick, or 'spit' when they are angry
- They will refuse to move if the load on their back is too heavy
- Llamas are 6 feet tall and 300-450 pounds
- These animals are herbivores – eat grass and ferns
- Llamas have three 'stomachs' to digest grasses
- They are very social and curious
- They are a 'guard' animal for sheep - (will fight off predators, like coyote, foxes, and wild dogs)
- The dried llama 'dung' (poop) is good for fire fuel
- They do not have 'hooves' - soft leather-like pads and two toenails each foot
- Llamas have excellent sight, smell, and hearing
- This animal can live 20-30 years
- They can be a good, but high-maintenance pet

L.L.A.M.A

Llamas can be white or shades of brown. Color the Llama.
Glue pieces of cotton balls to cover the Llama.
Find grass, hay, or straw. Glue in mouth and on the bottom.

