

Luka of the Coyos Backstory

Name: His original name is Lucas - Luka is his nickname

Species: Bipedal wingless gryphon. Black coyote / blue jay hybrid known locally as the "Garrire Coyo Avem" (Chattering Coyote Bird). However, Luka is an albino with yellow accents in his fur

Sex: ♂

Age: 20

Height: 5ft 4in

Weight: 120lbs

Siblings: No blood siblings, but raised in a pack with others of his age, whom he considered siblings. Around 10 of the pack are within 2 years of his age.

Pack: Large by pack standards, around 30 strong

Home: On planet Khanon, in Wico Forest, secluded from New Salem, the nearest city. Various species are known to settle there

Cultural Notes

The Coyos have been established in Wico Forest for many generations. There is some low-level, even passive, mutual antagonism between the Coyos and New Salem, each feeling that there is an 'outsiderness' to the other. For the Coyos, they assume that the city dwellers live a lifestyle of comfort, convenience, and individualism that they feel a level of disdain for. They also believe the city to be unpleasantly noisy and value the relative peace and quiet of the forest.

Forest packs are usually comprised mostly of females, as the males tend to leave upon reaching adulthood to join other packs or found their own. Some opt to move to New Salem due to the scarcity of non-city-founded community options. Although most of the males who do this move to the nearest city, some travel to cities further beyond. It is common to find a branch of the main pack that has settled into more permanent housing or chosen a combination of forest and city living.

The Coyos are not nomadic so settling in the forest is a viable option.

This trend of permanent migration to the city is not considered ideal to the pack as a whole as community is very important to the Coyos. Every member knows everybody else and everyone has a role that they fulfil to contribute to the pack, whether it's for its survival, for entertainment, or to make new discoveries. As a result of this, the concept of purpose is also important to the culture of the pack, and this encourages each member to contribute.

As a pack, the Coyos have a culture of valuing, and passing on, knowledge and wisdom. Older members teach the younger ones everything they need to know about hunting and gathering, nest-building, leadership, and any other knowledge of cultural value such as folklore and jewellery-making. While not everybody is expected to take on all jobs within the pack, they value well-roundedness in any given individual and the ability to pass skills on to the next generation.

For the purpose of clarifying nomenclature, a young gryphon is called a pup.

Most if not all gryphons have difficulty with speech to some extent, as their beaks do not easily facilitate it.

Given that Luka is an albino, he is more susceptible than most gryphons to cancer. Albino gryphons are the most prone to getting cancer on the tips and bases of their ears, on their eyelids, and on their beaks.

Wico Forest has various natural and man-made clearings which the Coyos use for living space, farming, and as a natural result of their need for wood. Despite this, the canopy above is far-reaching and dense enough that even the clearings are well-shaded. Therefore, Luka was well protected from the sun for the duration of his puphood.

Luka is an original character from an unnamed story currently in production. He is talkative and passionate about his life's calling (foraging for food, medicine, and other supplies from his beloved Wico Forest), and, despite being good at appearing to be sociable, loves to spend time with Kiroku and to meditate.

Trust & Confidence

(newborn)

Luka's life started in much the same as many of those of his tribe mates, although the very first thing he ever did was to surprise everybody. Everybody, not least his mother, was surprised to see that he had been born with white fur.

His white fur prompted a big debate among the Coyos that he was never informed of, later in life. Some of it was unpleasant: it was suggested by some that during her pregnancy she had experimented with witchcraft and magic. Others suggested that it was a sign of a lack of vigour in Luka, and that he would die within the year.

Others were more favourable, though still fanciful: that his whiteness was a symbol of his mother's pure and peaceful character. It was certainly true that she was peaceful by nature. During her pregnancy she had loved to go into the forest to find somewhere peaceful where to meditate and contemplate the pup she was going to have.

Whatever the perception of his colour, Luka was born at a time that worked out very nicely for him as he was the youngest for a while. Most of the youngest pups prior to himself had already moved on from their mothers' laps and started to integrate with the rest of the pack, leaving just one named Kiroku.

As a result of this, Luka received much more attention than was usual for a pack pup. That led him to feel particularly fawned over, cherished, and loved. As with the other babies of the Coyos, Luka was looked after not only by his mother, but by various women of the tribe so this amounted to a lot of lovely attention that definitely did not go unappreciated!

Freedom & Self-Determination

(toddlerhood)

His development from helpless baby to active toddler was a boon for Luka! He developed the ability to move under his own power, and he also developed a sense that he was a separate being from the women on whose laps he had been laying. With his development into a toddler he came to realise that he, and the women looking after him, were separate

people.

At first he used his sense of separateness to realise that there was him, the woman he happened to be with at any given time, and the work that she was doing, which was not a person but a set of inanimate (but fascinating!) objects. He began to pay attention to what the woman was doing. The jewellery, cloth, and other things that all of the women worked with were pretty, either brightly coloured, intriguingly patterned, or both, and he loved what he saw.

The women chatted while they worked, and he picked up on that too. Once he'd noticed it, he felt strongly that he wanted to join in. Luka couldn't talk yet, but he babbled along with the conversation, and quickly learned which noises got a positive reaction. In fact, he became quite the talker before he could even really talk! This habit stuck with him for the rest of his life.

It didn't take him long to see where the woman's immediate store of new thread, beads, or anything else were (usually beside them within easy reach), so he often picked them up to examine them. He didn't do much with them to start with, apart from putting them in his beak, but the women made sure he didn't do himself (or the materials) any harm, and encouraged him to turn his attention to making things instead. Luka loved this! The ability to choose to be active and to take part in what the group was doing was quite a novelty!

Soon after this he began to look further than the lap on which he sat and the stockpile of pretty things around the womens' feet, and realised that there was a whole, exciting world around him to explore. So he went and explored it! He began to explore beyond the womens' circle sooner than most of pups.

Cooperation in the tribe's children was pleasing to the women, but so was spirit. Luke discovered that his adventures could often lead to hilarity or raucous encouragement from the women, and he enjoyed that too! Sometimes Luka misjudged whether a particular action would please or annoy them, and he decided that he liked their approval enough to aim for that instead of incurring their scorn. It was not that their scorn was particularly harsh, it was just that he preferred their approval - especially the good-natured, laughing, 'what are you like?' kind of approval where he knew he had not just pleased them, but entertained them too.

As such he became quite adept at being well mannered while also finding ways to indulge his own sense of adventure without incurring the displeasure of his elders. That was quite the skill for little Luka to learn, and as he grew from a toddler into a young child, it continued to serve him well.

He had a few misadventures but nothing that did any permanent damage. They were enough however, to nudge his personality. After one of these in which he found himself in moderate danger he developed a sense of self-doubt about his preparedness. From then on he preferred to think through his approach. At this age his capacity for logical thought was still shaky so his thinking could be intuitive rather than rational, and he developed a dual tendency to either resort to 'magical thinking' or to doubt himself if he didn't feel capable enough to think his way through a given problem.

Confidence helped him to overcome this most of the time, and he developed a talent for projecting confidence even if he didn't feel it. The fact that the other Coyos found confidence pleasing to see only encouraged Luka to develop it further.

Ambition

(young childhood)

Of the other pups of similar age to him he was most interested in Kiroku. Kiroku was quiet, observant, approached tasks with thoughtfulness and care, was a little bit older than Luka, and the women seemed to like him. At first Kiroku was hesitant when Luka approached him but in time Kiroku opened up to the experience and they began to spend time together. Luka's mother claimed that he was too young to do this, but Luka was still in the throes of enjoying the novelty of having choices, and chose to venture beyond the nurturing circle.

For Luka's part, Kiroku being a little bit older than him meant that if he got to know him then he would have an opportunity to mix in an older crowd than his own, most of whom remained within the circle of mothers for the time being.

Luka continued to learn which kinds of talk and action, and the attitude that underlay them, got the best reactions out of the other Coyos. They praised his discoveries and creations and cheered him on for his adventurous spirit, and that helped him to further develop his taste for adventure on its own. This encouragement of his curiosity led to him becoming a very good creative, out-of-the-box thinker.

It was also clear that Luka was going to become a very attractive adult. Not only was his fur colour eye-catching, but he had the makings of some very good looks! This only encouraged the trend towards others finding him a pleasing individual, and encouraged him in playing up to the positivity of others.

With all of that said, Luka was fascinated with the world around him and explored it every day to see what new items, animals, places, and adventures he could find.

As the other pups began to venture beyond the nurturing circle Luka began to develop more of a relationship with those too. With that said, he was old enough by this time to be aware of his unique colour. So were the other pups, and he got a share of "you're different" sentiments from them, both implicit and explicit. However, the adults made sure to teach the pups that every member of the pack was born into it for a reason, and so to accept Luka. Luka was generally bashful and kind but if another pup was unpleasant he could be quick-witted and jokingly cruel. That was not his default way of behaving however, and he didn't do it often enough to develop a firm reputation for it. In later life he took to using this to make a point whenever he needed to.

Being as smart as he was, he quickly learned good social skills, including those of compromise and of diplomacy. He preferred connection with others (and all the rewards that provided to him) over winning arguments or keeping any particular object he found. He also became good at seeming to be interested in any subject that another gryphon cared to bring up. However, with his relaxed, easy-going and positive attitude, sometimes it could be hard to tell how genuine this was.

For non-dangerous tasks, Luka developed his confidence so that he no longer worried about trying them out and presenting them to others. In fact, his confidence allowed him to overcome the worst of it. With that said, Luka was still invested enough in wanting to get things right that whenever he did well in a task, he couldn't hide his joy.

As Luka explored the forest, going beyond the clearing, he began to love it. He found forest creatures that he enjoyed watching. He found flowers, mushrooms, fruits, and other food. He even began teaching himself how to make jewellery out of flowers and vines, in mimicry of the work the women did in the nursery circle.

Productivity

(older childhood)

Luka developed physically to the point where he could reliably think rationally rather than having to rely on intuition. By this point he had a well-established repertoire of habits that relied on intuition: confidence, social smarts, charm, and other similar skills. However, as he reached his 7th year his brain developed to a point where he could put his tendency to doubt himself into perspective by critiquing the problem at hand properly. Sometimes he still doubted his own ability to meet certain challenges, but now he had the innate ability to plan and prepare to the point where he could afford to stop worrying about it.

This he did over time, and it helped him to feel more genuinely relaxed around others - and excited, as he could simply enjoy his adventures and the completion of any tasks asked of him by the elders.

Luka's social skills made him good at being a team player (as that often depended on him being cooperative, sensible, and a pleasing character, both of which he was good at), and being a team leader too (his adventurous spirit and his receding aversion to riskier tasks, along with his social skills, gave him good leadership qualities. He also learned some valuable lessons about leadership from Kiroku, who had a very gentle and thoughtful approach to much of his life and whom the elders were starting to groom as a future leader). With that said, Luka liked to get things done, so if a team was proving ineffective then he preferred not to be a part of it and work independently instead.

He continued to go into the forest by himself whenever he could. Often he would bring things back that he thought his pack would find useful (usually food), and this attracted the attention of the elders. They decided to start training and preparing him to become one of the pack's foragers for food and for medicines. At first Luka loved the idea of wandering into the forest each day with one of the tribesmen to build on his knowledge and skill. He loved to learn and discover new things, and the more he learned, the more new and special things he had to share with Kiroku.

However, as time went on he came to realise the truth: that a lot of his time in the forest was spent training, and that training was most definitely work and not relaxation time. He was accompanied almost all of the time and couldn't take the time to make forest jewellery any more.

He made the most of the time he did have free to talk with the other pups (and increasingly with the older gryphons), to spend time with Kiroku (with whom he was developing a very close and unique bond), and hanging out in the forest by himself. It wasn't as much time as he would have liked to have. He liked talking with the other gryphons and appreciated the individuality of each, along with the ways that their lives were so interwoven and interdependent upon each other.

With all of this happening, Luka had begun to feel as if he couldn't truly be himself. Self-

expression and being the centre of attention could be a wonderful thing, but Luka had lost his way with regards to this, playing up an ideal to the rest of the pack that didn't reflect his whole self. The outermost parts of the forest were the only places where he felt he could find enough relief from these social pressures to reflect on who he really was.

He became more keenly aware of one feature of the forest, however. Or rather, as his trainer took him on more structured walks into the forest, the subject of the nearest city came up. The tribesman avoided getting too close to it whenever possible but Luka became aware that it was there. He mentioned it to Kiroku, who was similarly interested in it. This remained at the backs of their minds as their respective trainers taught them what they needed to know.

Child to Adult Transition

(adolescence)

When Luka became a teenager his tribesman mentor finally deemed him skilled enough to forage on his own. However, this did not provide the freedom he had longed for. His responsibilities now involved full-time foraging and he simply didn't have the time to stop and meditate.

For a while, foraging lost its magic for Luka. The training had often been demanding, and at times Luka became disinterested and wanted to do anything other than forage.

However trapped in this routine he was, it allowed him to set his own schedule and the areas that he decided to visit each day. That allowed him to visit the edge of the forest closest to New Salem. He became more interested in it the more he saw of it, and he often talked about it with Kiroku.

Sometimes, at night, they would go and look at it, and soon began exploring the city's limits.

In the meantime, he began to realise that his feelings for Kiroku were more complex than simply being best friends. He sometimes thought about Kiroku in a way he never thought about the girls. When he and Kiroku were in the forest alone together he loved showing Kiroku the new places and things he had discovered, and he continued to make forest jewellery whenever he could. For him, taking the time to make flower crowns and other jewellery was worth it to see Kiroku wearing it. Kiroku seemed to enjoy it very much too, and it gave Luka a chance to touch Kiroku's hair and hands.

His attraction and friendship with Kiroku were not the only aspects of their relationship that Luka appreciated. Kiroku, much like him, felt like an outsider within the Coyos. Luka himself didn't open up about this to anyone, not even Kiroku, but Kiroku became very open about his sense of being an outsider. Luka took to heart the fact that Kiroku trusted him enough to tell him about that, and that he considered Luka knowledgeable enough to come to him for advice.

As far as the other members of the tribe were concerned, Luka was well-liked. He was personable and kind, attractive, had a unique colour (that even those of his pack mates who had found it strange were coming around to as they began to deem it less important), he was knowledgeable about foraging, and he had offbeat interests that he loved to talk about, such as makeshift jewellery making.

For his own part, Luka most enjoyed the friendly members of the tribe, the free spirits of the pack, and those with interesting minds and interests. He had long since become good at managing multiple social circles. He disliked gossipers, rowdy pack mates, and those given to being illogical.

Others found that he had a strong sense of presence - that was, when he was around. Most of the time he was in the forest instead.

However intrusive he found his responsibilities, Luka enjoyed social events, celebrations, and gatherings. At these times he would work longer to find extra food for these events, and cook soups and present berries for the others in the pack. He also liked to cook fresh, beautiful meals for his mother and the other tribeswomen.

Luka continued to enjoy meditation time and he got to know his mind very well. As he reached sexual maturity, the time he took to relax alone in the forest often turned sexual as he developed, and enjoyed, his body. He loved doing so while surrounded by the peace, sounds, and smells of the forest.

As the years went by, Luka and Kiroku's visits to New Salem became so common and they came to find it such a familiar place (not to mention a sanctuary from their responsibilities) that Kiroku suggested they move there permanently. Luka liked this idea.

Closeness in Relationships

(young adulthood)

Once they had settled in New Salem Luka found a job assisting with the running of a small farmer's market district. In addition to this, the home he and Kiroku had found together had a small garden which he used to grow fruit and vegetables that he sold at the market.

He networked well and began to develop a reputation for producing good quality produce and for being friendly and knowledgeable. In time this evolved to him inviting customers to his garden at home where he could teach them how to grow any kind of produce. He also grew and prepared home remedies.

Luka found this work wonderfully satisfying. Like all members of the Coyos he loved sharing his knowledge and his infectious passion, and he loved to feel that he was serving others with these things. He also felt that the city gave enough back to make all of this sustainable - he had turned his passion into a job and it paid well enough for him to support himself and Kiroku.

Kiroku promised Luka that one day they would return to the pack where he would be able to forage again in the forest. Luka remembered that and looked forward to it.

He quickly developed the beginnings of a social network, and once he had done that, a smaller number of friends arose from that group with whom he developed closer bonds. Despite his outgoing nature, he preferred having fewer, higher quality relationships like this.

Occasionally Luka tried doing different work to his foraging, growing, and cooking. Although he could do other work, his passion never deviated from the work he had been

trained in as a pup, and he inevitably returned to it.

Luka deeply cherishes the genuine intimacy that exists between himself and Kiroku. which allows for either of them to show their vulnerabilities and to be reassured, encouraged, or consoled.

Luka had stayed in the shade by default for most of his childhood (as not much sun reached the forest floor) and only spent time in the sun during his time in New Salem. When he did spend time in the sun he got hot easily and stayed in the shade whenever possible. He also had a big farmer's hat that he wore whenever working in his garden which he made himself. He also enjoyed spending time in water and didn't particularly like summer.

Passing on Responsibilities

(older adulthood)

Luka looks forward to the day that he can return to the forest with Kiroku and forage there again. He misses his tribe mates, and most of all his mother. Both he and Kiroku look forward to the day when they both feel the time is right to return and to teach everything they have learned to the next generation.

Luka and Kiroku, both being male, will never have children of their own, but as members of the Coyos they consider the next generation of pups to be their responsibility and look forward to guiding them towards their own adulthoods.

End of Life

(old age)

Luka believes strongly in the circle of life, and in karma. As stated above he has plans to fulfil his life's purpose by passing on his knowledge to the next generation, and he continues to be passionate about that knowledge. He is therefore likely to feel peaceful about death when his time comes.

He would like to die in the forest, in Kiroku's arms, where his body can nurture the plants and trees he loves so much.

Credits

Based on theory by:

Erikson, E., (1951) 'Childhood and Society', W.W. Norton & Company, Inc. chapter 7.

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~Hayley, The Character Consultancy