

## OMAR

Omar was one very, lucky donkey. He had the best job in the world, entertaining people at the *Fiesta on the Mountain*, a show that celebrated Mexican culture and hospitality. Every afternoon a bus loaded with people from the city would come up the dusty road and stop in the middle of the square, where all the happy people would disembark. Let the party begin!

Omar watched the people as they tried the different games and activities that were ready for them. He liked it when the kids would gather around him and patiently wait their turn for a ride around the square. Omar felt like a king. He had just received a new saddle and blanket and was proud of his job making children happy.

Omar was also part of the rodeo, where he played games and showed the crowd how fast he could run. The people were always surprised because of donkeys' reputations of being slow and lazy. Omar's friends in the rodeo included the horses, cows, and the mean old bull, which was the least liked animal in the show. After having fun playing games and entertaining the cheering crowd, it was time for the rodeo to end. Everyone, including Omar, were ready eat and rest. Omar was always tired and hungry after the rodeo and looked forward to a meal followed by his afternoon siesta.

Tomorrow another bus load of happy people would come to the fiesta and Omar would be able to do these fun things over again. But for now, Omar ate his dinner of hay and corn, and went to sleep dreaming about his wonderful life at the fiesta.

## OMAR LEAVES THE MOUNTAIN

Omar the donkey was excited. Yesterday a man visited the mountain and asked Omar's handler if he thought the donkey would be interested in going down to the city to participate in a petting zoo. When Omar heard this, he was thrilled. He ran around the corral kicking up his back legs and snorting his excitement for everyone to hear. After settling down, he thought what this meant to him. He had never been off the mountain, let alone to the city. It also meant a chance to make new friends and launch a new career. His father would be so proud, as his father worked hard but had never been given such an opportunity.

Omar was excited as he knew today was the big day. He could not eat breakfast thinking about what the day was going to bring. Soon the truck and the trailer that was to take Omar to the city arrived. Omar was ready, his saddle, blankets, reigns, toothbrush, and comb packed. After saying his goodbyes, down the mountain he went. They made their way through the city streets, busy with cars and people. Omar was wide-eyed, taking in the new sights and sounds he was experiencing. Soon the hustle and bustle of the streets lessened, and they turned onto a long driveway leading to a large farm, Omar's new home.

Omar was taken to his place in the barn. The barn was noisy as there were different animals that lived there. Omar's neighbors were a family of goats who had lived on the farm a long time. They offered to give Omar a tour, so off they went to meet the other animals. There was a

mother pig and her babies, a miniature pony, a llama, and a sheep close by. In another part of the barn there were rabbits, Guinea pigs, ducks, and chickens. The prettiest animal in the barn was the alpaca. On occasion, other animals would come for a visit, like the baby calf, and at one time a baby camel. Omar had never seen these animals before and would have to learn to have a good relationship with them.

Soon the day was over, which meant dinnertime and bed. After a tasty dinner of hay and oats, Omar said goodnight to the other animals and immediately went to sleep thinking about what tomorrow would bring. This little donkey's life would never be the same.

### **OMAR AT THE PETTING ZOO**

Omar woke with a start; he had hardly slept a wink last night due to his excitement. Today he was going to be in the petting zoo at the local fair. It was still dark outside, but his friends in the barn had shared that on these special days they ate breakfast early, were put on a truck and left for the fair right after dawn. Some of the animals did not like going because of the children who pulled their ears and hair. Omar knew these kids were not being mean, but were excited as they had never been so close to animals and their parents did not always watch them closely. Omar had two jobs at the fair, one was being in the pen where the children could pet him and give him treats, the other was to give rides to them.

After much ado, the animals were on the truck heading down the long driveway towards town. After a short ride they were there. Omar was amazed at the different things at the fair, the mechanical rides, the barns full of animals, the food vendors, and the games. The thing Omar liked best was listening to the horses in the barn next to him stomping their feet, their restless behaviour meaning they were hungry and waiting to be fed. Omar became sad as he realized how he missed all of his friends on the mountain. Someday he would be able to see them again.

Soon everyone was in place and the fair gates opened. Children and parents were everywhere petting the animals, giving them treats and talking nicely to them. Omar was happy, as he loved to see the smiles on the kids' faces and hear their laughter, but some of the children were scared of him. Soon it was time for Omar to give rides, which was his favorite thing to do. After giving rides to happy children, the day was over, and Omar was exhausted and ready to go home. The fair was more fun than he had expected.

The trip back to the farm was quiet, as the animals were tired and looking forward to a restful sleep. Omar was nervous about tomorrow, as he heard that some animals were going to be moved to another farm. He was hoping he was not one of them. He laid his head down and was soon in a deep sleep, dreaming about his past and future adventures.

### **OMAR LEAVES THE FARM**

Omar heard voices in the barn and wondered if these were the men that were going to take him away. They had come yesterday, and he had overheard them talking about moving him to another farm. This made Omar anxious, and he had not slept well worrying about what was in store for him. As the voices drew closer, Omar heard a young girl. She approached Omar and threw her arms around his neck, hugging him tightly. She told Omar she would take care of him,

as he was to become her donkey and best friend. Her father took Omar to a waiting trailer, which he entered happily now that he knew good things were in store for him.

After a short journey, they reached their destination and Omar was led to the most beautiful barn he had ever seen. His stall was luxurious. The young girl, whose name was Lucille, had decorated it with streamers and a sign to welcome Omar home. To Omar's surprise, there were also pictures of him and his friends at *Fiesta on the Mountain* hanging on the wall. Lucille had often gone to the fiesta to celebrate special family events and was familiar with Omar. After finding out he had left the fiesta, she went to see him at the fair with her father, who negotiated for Omar to come live at their farm and become his daughter's cherished friend.

Soon Lucille's family and friends were crowded around Omar, remarking on the beautiful makeover Lucille had given him. His ears were adorned with pretty covers her grandmother had made for him. He had a gorgeous blanket her aunt had made and a beautiful saddle and reigns. Omar was one very, lucky donkey!

Lucille took care of Omar, grooming him, taking him for rides around the farm and introducing him to the other animals that lived there. He had the best quality feed and there was always fresh water in his stall, which Omar was not used to.

The days at the farm were filled with fun. When Lucille was at school, Omar went to the corral where he played with his new friends, Taco and Bell, two horses that were brothers and belonged to Lucille's father. They would race around the corral, Omar showing them how fast he could run. The cows outside the fence enjoyed watching, to their great amusement.

One day Lucille came running with exciting news, Omar was getting a girlfriend. Lucille's grandmother had arranged for a sweet lady donkey to come and keep Omar company. Omar would never be lonely again. His head swam with excitement as his thoughts spun out of control. What he needed was a good night's sleep, so he would be ready to meet his new friend with a clear head. Omar was heading for a new adventure, starting a family. He wondered if he was ready.

### **OMAR AND JULIETTE**

Omar waited patiently for the new arrival, dressed in his best outfit, including a new hat. Lucille's family was also waiting. There had been a large party the night before celebrating Lucille's birthday. This morning everyone was waiting on the latest addition to their farm family. Suddenly, a cheer went up as the truck and trailer headed up the long driveway. Omar was so nervous his legs were shaking, and he felt weak, like he was going to faint. He took a large drink of water and turned his attention to the excitement around the trailer which had arrived. Omar stood with Lucille at the back of the trailer. Lucille's father opened the gate and Omar's head exploded with bright red hearts. There in front of him was the most beautiful donkey he had ever laid his eyes on.

Juliette stepped off the trailer, instantly coming to Omar and rubbing her head against his. Omar knew this was a match made in heaven. After much fanfare it was time to show Juliette her new lodgings. The barn had been scrubbed clean anticipating her arrival, and the other animals in the

barn were excited for Omar and his new bride. A hush fell over the barn as Juliette took in her new surroundings. Juliette felt lucky to be here, as she had come from a poor family who could barely afford to feed her. The couple retired to their new joint stall where they ate lunch and got to know each other better.

Omar told Juliette about his life on *Fiesta on the Mountain*, and Juliette acknowledged she had heard of him, as he was a famous donkey. She told Omar about her previous home, and how fortunate she was to be here. Soon they both lay down on the thick bed of straw and fell sound asleep. Omar was looking forward to showing his new wife around the farm and introducing Juliette to the other residents. Omar's wife was happy knowing that she, and any future children, would be well taken care of here. Omar and Juliette were already a happy couple.

### **A BABY IS BORN**

Omar was pacing back and forth in the stall. Juliette had been in labor for a long time and the veterinarian had said it might be hours more before she delivered. Omar was excited, this being his first child. He was also very worried, as this was his first baby, and he did not know what to expect. Juliette's pregnancy had been normal, and Omar made sure she ate the right foods and got rest. The doctor said the baby was healthy and would come out kicking. But for Omar it was a nervous waiting game.

Juliette lay comfortably in the straw, telling Omar she thought the time was getting close. Omar heard voices coming; it was the vet, Lucille, and her father. The doctor had decided to administer medicine to speed up the birth process, as Juliette had been in labor for so long. The doctor had Juliette stand up and gave her an injection, saying the baby should be born soon. Omar nestled his nose in Juliette's neck trying to comfort her; this being her first baby, she was scared. Suddenly she felt strange movements and the need to push. In what seemed like only a second, she could hear a low whimpering sound and felt an emptiness in her stomach. The baby had been born.

Omar and Juliette were ecstatic! It was finally over. A huge sense of relief swept over them. The vet examined the baby and gave him a clean bill of health. On wobbly legs, and with a little help from his father, the baby made it over to his mother where he had his first taste of warm milk. He drank his fill and went to sleep with his mother. Omar looked on with a sense of pride in his heart. They knew the baby was a boy, but they had not been able to choose a name for him yet.

The barn was dark and quiet, Omar relieved that everything had gone well. It was time for him to get rest, as tomorrow was going to be busy. He nestled in beside his wife and was immediately sleeping, the day's events temporarily forgotten about. Omar's life had been changed forever.

### **BABY JACK**

After lengthy discussions, and a million names, Omar and Juliette decided to call the new baby Jack. Jack was Omar's oldest brother who had passed away just last year. The baby reminded Omar of Jack, his color and markings identical. After spending two days in the stall, everyone

was ready to explore the corral and let Jack get acquainted with the animals that shared the barn. Omar was proud to be a new father and had promised Juliette he would have a big part in raising Jack.

As they left the stall, cheers rang loudly in their ears. Jack kept close to his mother as this noise scared him. Juliette assured Jack he was safe, and this was the animals' way of showing their excitement about his birth. All the animals gathered around Jack, which made him nervous, but after assurances from his mother, Jack calmed down and was ready to meet his housemates.

There were the two horses, his daddy's friends, Taco and Bell and their new baby Burrito. There were goats led by Scruffy and Emma, and there were also sheep with new babies, some only weeks older than Jack. There was the potbellied pig, Petunia, who liked nothing better than to eat and make loud noises, which bothered the other animals, especially when they were trying to sleep. Then there were the cows, Bertha and Harry, and their baby Noah. Last were the geese and their goslings, the ducks, chickens, and the most beautiful, but not modest, Joanne the peacock.

Burrito and Noah offered to take Jack outside and show him their favorite places to play. After coaxing from his mother, Jack threw up his back legs and followed his new friends outside. They met up with their friend Ruffles, the family dog, who often accompanied them on their adventures. Tired from playing, they soon headed back to the barn for lunch, everyone happy they had made new friends. Jack was now comfortable, and knew he was going to enjoy life here at the farm. After a delicious lunch of warm milk, Jack fell asleep snuggled into his mother and was one content baby donkey.

### **OMAR RETURNS TO THE MOUNTAIN**

One morning Lucille came to the barn with wonderful news for Omar. She had made plans to take Omar and his family back to the *Fiesta on the Mountain* for her eighteenth birthday party. Lucille's entire family was coming, aunts, uncles, grandmas, grandpas, cousins, and even Ruffles, the family dog. Omar was excited to be going home for a visit, and able to show Jack where he had been born and raised.

Soon the big day arrived. Everyone loaded into a large caravan of cars and trucks and were soon off. Lucille's father had booked this party as a private event just for his family. After a long drive through the city and up the mountain they arrived in the square. A loud, excited crowd surrounded Omar and his family. The people of the mountain had missed Omar and had been looking forward to meeting Juliette and Jack. They had heard of the donkeys' adventures in the lowlands, entertaining at children's parties, visiting seniors' homes to let the elderly pet and hug them, and being in a show about the history of donkeys in Mexican culture.

Omar introduced his family to all his old friends and took them on a tour of the Fiesta, explaining all they did there. After hours of playing and partying, an announcement was made for the party goers to head to the corral for the rodeo. There the people were entertained with horse tricks, bull riding, and joined in games related to the rodeo.

At the conclusion of the show, it was time to eat dinner. After a short walk Lucille and her family arrived at the dining hall and took their seats. A special area was set for Omar and his

family with all the best foods a donkey could eat. After a wonderful meal, the man who ran the Fiesta announced that Jack would be staying to continue on the family tradition of entertaining in the *Fiesta on the Mountain*. Jack was filled with pride as the crowd cheered loudly, and tears flowed down Omar's cheeks. He and Juliette would surely miss their son, but he was older now and would benefit from this safe and educational experience.

Everyone said their good-byes and the caravan went back down the mountain to their farm below. Omar and Juliette were sad that their only son was not returning with them but knew he would be happy on the mountain. It had been a stressful day and Omar and Juliette were happy to be home. They laid down and were quickly sleeping soundly, not even Petunia's snoring keeping them awake.

### **OMAR RETIRES**

The days turned into weeks, the weeks into months, and the months into years. Omar's life had once again taken a sharp turn. He was old. He still loved children, but he could no longer give them rides because his back was not strong. He could not run like he used to, and his bones and joints ached all the time. His wife Juliette had passed away a year ago, after a prolonged illness. Omar missed her greatly.

His son, Jack, had stayed and had a successful career at *Fiesta on the Mountain*. He had a wife named Melony and a beautiful daughter, Rosie, who was a gifted dancer. People came from all over Mexico to the *Fiesta on the Mountain* to watch her show.

Omar reflected on his life and was happy with how satisfying it had been. But now it was time to think about his future. No longer able to work, he was going to a donkey sanctuary where he would spend the rest of his life in the company of other donkeys, being well taken care of.