

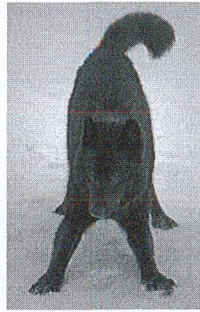


I Am Wolf

By: Nhazheir Bradley



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Age: 14

In the mountains of Wyoming, I was born. A blind, deaf wolf pup with black fur. Raised by my parents, the alpha male and alpha female, we lived with other wolves we called our pack. One afternoon, my parents and siblings went out to find food and never returned.

I am alone in the wilderness, my family was killed. Hungry and curious, in my den, I am driven by hunger and thirst to find food and water.

I leave my den, in the distance I hear running water from a nearby stream, the wind brushes the leaves on the trees. Birds were chirping, chipmunks peeping through a hole in rotting tree limb, a scurrying rabbit are the sounds I hear. Slowly, I look around.

I sniff the ground, scratched the earth with my paw, stopped to mark a tree and ran toward the water to get a drink. Strange things are leaping in the water. I test the water with my paw and took a drink. I am excited by all I see, especially the large grizzly bear moving toward the water. I watch him as he snatches one of those weird things and began to eat it. I was so hungry I thought I would try. I stepped into the moving water, those things swimming past me. I tried to take one with my mouth, but they are so slippery. After a few tries, finally I caught one. It is salmon.

The sun sets in the distance, I hear the howling of other wolves. I didn't want to be alone and called out to them with a loud H-O-W-L and hoped that I could find them. On a bed of leaves I slept through the night. The next morning, I wake up and am hungry. Salmon didn't fill me up. I remember going to eat with my parents; deer, elk and smaller animals from the forests. More than food, I want to find another wolf that I can live with. I know that I can hunt better and live longer with a pack. We are stronger together and feed and protect each other; we are a family.

I travel searching for food, water and a mate. By following the sound of another wolf howl, I crossed from Wyoming into South Dakota. I use my instinct to help me; my sense of sight, smell, hearing, my ferocity and will to survive in the wilderness.

After weeks of traveling, on a mountain top in the Black Hills of South Dakota, I find the wolf who was howling. She will start a pack with me and we will help each other survive.

Without wolves, the environment will suffer. We keep herds healthy by eating animals that are sick, and disease won't spread to the rest of the herd. We contribute to a healthy ecosystem. A world without wolves is a world with no spirit. May our howls be heard in the distance for generations.