



Friends, strangers and social media turn two heartbreaks into a happy ending.

by Britta Jacobson

“When life hands you lemons, you make lemonade.” You have all heard this slightly sarcastic saying about dealing with things when they do not go your way.

This embodiment of that philosophy began with the joy of two new foals entering the world...a long hoped-for colt out of the 18.1 hand black Clydesdale mare, Nakita, and a filly out of a little 14.1 hand Quarter Horse reining mare named Whiz Ms Dolly.

Within the horse world there are many different disciplines and the boundaries between them are seldom crossed.

The story starts with a double tragedy -- a stillborn foal and the death of mare who had just given birth -- and the willingness of strangers to help each other.

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The first phone call regarding the Clydesdale came from the veterinary clinic at 8 p.m. on April 9. "I wanted to let you know that your mare Nakita gave birth to a healthy colt," was the message for Nakita's owners Carl and Kirsten Absher. "He is up and has already nursed once. If you want to come see them tonight we will make an exception to the normal visiting hours." The Abshers lived 40 minutes away in Shingle Springs, California and wasted no time in making the trip to the clinic to meet the new arrival.



The second call came the next day at 4 a.m. The mare was down with complications, but because she had been under observation, as was the clinic protocol, they caught it immediately. A third and then a fourth call came in to inform the stunned owners that, at 4:19 a.m. April 10, their mare had died.

Not wanting the risks of raising a foal without a mother, the Abshers reached out to their friend Shamarie Tong for help in locating a nurse mare.

Meanwhile...

That same morning, 130 miles away in Santa Rosa, my Quarter Horse mare, Whiz Ms Dolly, gave birth to a stillborn filly.



Having bred and raised my own competition horses for many years and having been in the

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situation of raising an orphaned foal many years ago, I knew that my loss could benefit someone else. While still monitoring the mare with our veterinarian, I immediately posted on Facebook that I had a nurse mare available.

Enter friends, social media and strangers willing to help. Shamarie Tong posted that her friends lost a mare and were hoping to find a nurse mare. Ryan Fowler of Skyline Silversmiths was the first one to connect the two posts. When I was made aware of the orphaned foal, I wasted no time in calling the Abshers.

Kirsten Absher laughs when she recalls that phone call. “Hi, this is Britta Jacobson of Bennett Valley Ranch. My mare just had a still born foal this morning and if you want a nurse mare, I suggest you pack up your foal right now and get down here. We have saved the placenta to help introduce your foal to my mare.”

“It sounded more like a command than anything,” Kirsten continues. “It was just exactly what my husband and I needed to hear at that moment. Several hours later Kiskasen was given the OK to travel.”

I hadn't thought to ask about the breed of the foal prior to the transport. I was somewhat surprised to find out it was a Clydesdale!

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, once the foal arrived at my Bennett Valley Ranch everyone donned masks and gloves. Carl and Kirsten rubbed the colt thoroughly with the placenta I'd saved from my mare's stillborn foal. Then I draped it over the foal's back and led in the distraught Whiz Ms Dolly. After a few tense minutes, the mare began to relax. To everyone's relief, she allowed Kiskasen to nurse.



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By late May, Spindrifts Kiskasen was growing up nicely alongside his adopted mother. You can't miss this pair: Whiz Ms Dolly is 14.1 hands and her adopted son will be as tall as her soon! My husband and I breed and train Quarter Horses and I am an NRHA Non-Pro reining competitor. The purebred Clydesdale colt stands out among our other horses in size and appearance but is otherwise fitting in just fine.

A significant portion of the approximately 600 Clydesdales born in the United States each year are bay, with the other colors being chestnut, black, or roan. Kiskasen is one of the small percent that will be black once he sheds his baby fuzz.

So, if you ever see a black Clydesdale pulling the famous Budweiser wagon, remember the little Quarter Horse mare and the generosity and ingenuity of the horse community that enabled him to grow into his big, strong self.