Story / Poem Kelley D., Virginia

Horses are not just animals. They are magnificent beings, made up of fire, power, and soul. Even old school ponies have these elements, but they never get the chance to set them free.

Horses are also filled with love and compassion. They are forgiving and comforting too. I'm going to tell you a story about the first time I met a horse like this. She lived out of all places, at a summer camp stable.

Scarlett was trained chestnut Mustang, who had gotten her Mustang blood drained out of her. At times, she would be feisty and fickle, but she always had a forgiving nature. She was loving and compassionate, but it seemed as though her fire, power, and soul had been stowed away.

Gravel crunched beneath the wheels of my mom's car as we pulled into the stable. The riding instructor gave a lecture about safety that bored me to tears. Then a chestnut horse whinnied and caught my eye. The instructor assigned us horses. "Kelley, you'll be riding Scarlett," she told me. "I want you to be careful though, because she has a mind of her own." The stable hand then walked down the aisle holding the chestnut's reins in her hands.

"You mean I'm riding a Mustang?" I asked her. "You sure are!" the stable hand said to me with a smile. I took the reins from the stable hand and walked to the riding ring. The instructor, Sue, walked in and asked for us to mount our horses. I mounted up on Scarlett and asked her to walk on.

We walked and trotted during the lesson. Scarlett truly was a dream to ride. Before I knew it, the lesson was over! I dismounted and handed her to the next rider. We had to muck stalls. I was so envious watching the other girl ride Scarlett. How I wished I was riding her.

At the end of the day, me and two other girls groomed horses in after care. When it was Scarlett's turn I curried and brushed her very well. I wanted her to look picture perfect for the next day.

I was so excited the next day when we pulled into the stable. I rushed up to Sue. "Am I going to ride Scarlett today?" I asked her. "I'm afraid I have some bad news," she said. "This morning when I turned her out, she cut her neck on the fence. The veterinarian will be coming after your lesson, but I think she will be okay." My heart had broken in two.

I rode a different horse that day, but she wasn't the same as Scarlett. I was anticipating for when the vet came. When she finally arrived at the stable, I nearly knocked the barn down to find out if she was okay. The vet took one look at Scarlett and said, "She needs stitches." She gave Scarlett a shot of anesthesia, and Scarlett became droopy. I watch solemnly as the vet stitched

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Scarlett up. All the other girls at camp got grossed out by the needles. How could they not have cared about poor Scarlett?

The rest of the week went by fast. I always stopped and checked on Scarlett and gave her apples. But it wasn't the same as riding her. I know it was silly to get so worked up about a few stitches, but I couldn't help myself! I cared about her, and she cared about me in return.

Now I think that all Mustangs ought to be able to be free. I believe that one day, Scarlett will too. She will have a spirit of wind and fire, and nothing holding her back. She will be a true-bred Mustang.

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