

ANGEL HORSES

Grace

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One summer I visited a farm for two days to take part in a workshop dealing with horses and intuition. Twelve women attended the meeting, all of them having some connection with horses, either because they had a horse or felt at home with them. I was there because I was afraid of falling off of or being hurt by a horse. I viewed horses as big, powerful, and unpredictable.

At the beginning, while being instructed in horse safety, we only observed the horses. My heart was beating so hard it felt like it would escape my chest. Later we were asked to choose a horse to work with. As I roamed the corral and barn, large horses — Arabian, pinto, thoroughbred — surrounded me. Feeling fearful, I decided that a small horse might be easier for me to work with.

My eyes were drawn to two large brown thoroughbreds in the corral. Glad that a fence separated us, I stood and watched them. Their muscles rippled in the sun. Both horses looked so strong and alive, they were captivating my spirit. As I tried to choose between them, one in particular stared fixedly at me for a long time. I felt fearful yet excited. Our instructor had told us, “The horse may choose you.” I felt cornered by the alert presence of this horse, whose penetrating eyes seemed, for a moment, intimidating. I thought that she knew I was afraid.

Each horse wore a rune symbol on his or her backside. The other women and I sat down to decipher the symbol that correlated with the name of the horse we had paired up with. My horse turned out to be a mare with the name of Grace. She was a tall, shiny brown beauty whose rune symbol linked with the word openings. That meaning, along with her name, fit how I wanted to embrace this workshop — to be open. And I liked it that Grace and I were both females.

One by one, each of us went into the barn corral to be alone with her horse. The first minutes I spent by myself with Grace, she wanted nothing to do with me. I took it personally. Not only was I terrified of this horse, but she had rejected me.

My instructor said that maybe Grace didn't want contact with me then since she was eating. My time was not her timing. Maybe so, like God, whose timing is always perfect.

The second day I tried to remain upbeat. Our assignment for that day was to try to engage in a dance with our horse. Watching others interact with their horses had helped to put me at ease. I thought, Okay, I can try that!

Instinctively I took off my jacket and removed my watch to start anew, to be open and bold. Praying as I stepped into the corral, trusting as if I were a child, helped to calm my racing heart. This would be the last time that I could be alone with Grace. I wanted to get to know her and overcome my fears. I wanted desperately for her to accept me.

One of the instructors told me to approach Grace in a manner that showed I was a leader by throwing back my shoulders and exhaling. I petted Grace firmly above her shoulder, inviting her to come and follow to the left. Nothing I did worked. She wouldn't move. Then I tried walking to the right. She followed only partway. Stubborn lady!

Feeling like giving up, I went to an opening in the corral barn and stood at the fence, deeply breathing the fresh air, in and out, with my eyes skyward. My time with Grace was almost up. I walked back to this giant creature and stroked her again with both hands.

Without warning, Grace's front legs folded as if in slow motion amid a cloud of dust. Then she folded her back two legs until she sat on all fours on the ground. Suddenly she looked so small. I was overwhelmed with emotion and surprise. My instinct was to fall on my knees beside Grace, so I did.

Her nose became relaxed, touching the ground. She sat still, and I touched her. Never in my life have I felt so anchored, peaceful,

and still. By placing her trust in me, Grace had the power to quiet my heart and heal it.

As suddenly as she had folded to the ground, Grace turned on her back for a few moments with all four legs up in the air, looking vulnerable as could be. Then she rolled and got up.

Afterward I continued to feel at peace and sensed that my heart had opened. I felt reassured of my trustworthiness. I believe Grace made herself as small as she could in size and stillness so that my fears could dissolve into pure love and respect for the beautiful creature she is. I had fallen into the stillness of God's presence. Oh, the great gift Grace gives!

Meditation

When has a horse intuited your secret wishes and given you exactly what you needed?