

Suwannie Winds

by

Spirit Horse

I am happy now. Laying under this willow tree, in the spring with a small colt suckling me. The sun warmed grass with mist from a sweet tasting creek beside me. The river is in a small quiet place next to my new herd. I have not always had this life. This life would seem boring for any horse, but not me. Not for what I've been through. Here is my life's story.

I remember being cold. Calling out to my mother who I saw leaving me. I screamed for her to stay for I couldn't stand. I saw her black fur walk away into the woods. I was laying in a thicket of berries. I stretched out my neck and bit one off the bush. I spit it out for I wasn't yet weaned. I heard a growl beyond the bush. I also heard pounding hooves. I tried to stand but couldn't without my mother's help. I was so hungry. I saw a flash of tan and cream colored fur. The sounds around me grew louder and louder. I was just about to give up and when a broad shouldered, dun, mustang stallion jumped in front of me. A roar rang out and a cougar jumped on his back. He bucked and reared until the cougar fell off. The cougar screamed and pawed at the stallion and took off through the bushes. The horse turned to me and asked if I was ok. Then a paint came out and said,

- "No Spirit! Of course she's not ok!" She was right. I was very weak. She licked me until I was warm and helped me get to my feet. I got up and my white coat and emerald eyes shone in the sun that was coming through the trees. The so called Spirit walked over to the paint and nuzzled her. He looked at her and said,

- "Rain we can't keep on taking in the stray foals." I glanced at the dun stallion in a hopeful look. Rain saw me and nuzzled me to follow her. She ignored Spirit and walked back to the herd. Spirit followed us and was grumbling about me to Rain. We ignored him and soon reached the herd. I was amazed at how many horses looked up at us with amazed wondering eyes. Rain whispered that it was alright they were friendly. I saw one little colt that caught my eye. Rain saw my gaze and whispered, "That is Dust Stripe. Go and talk to him." I followed her gentle instruction when every one was grazing again. He looked up as I steadily approached him. We were both over-exciting foals and

talked at the same fast speed. We introduced each other and we had a lot in common. The same age, same story, and the same temper and personality. We soon became best friends. The next day, I was two days old along with Dust Stripe. We had decided to go on a secret quest. Spirit had split his hoof and needed an herb. We went into the woods and searched for an herb called Comfrey. It can heal a cracked hoof. We searched into the woods and found the herb. When we turned back, we were lost. Dust Stripe was as nervous as me but wouldn't let it show. He started to lead us towards a light at the end of the woods treeline. We emerged from the woods but we weren't in our herd. We were so little that we both layed down on our sides. Our sides heaved heavy breaths until we were rested. We stood and found our selves in the shadow of a huge furry creature. It had large nostrils and snorted at us. I stood up and saw hundreds of them behind the one. I smiled at them and put my knees atop his head. He smiled and shook his shaggy fur. He stomped his hoof and pointed his horns towards the North. We nodded and started away from the creatures called bison. We walked that way and soon walked out of another treeline to find our herd searching for us. Rain saw us with the Comfrey and hugged us tightly with her out-stretched neck. She went to the small cliff and announced our arrival. The herd sighed in relief and went back to grazing. Rain took the Comfrey from us and chewed it just to spit it out on Spirit's hoof. Spirit looked up, grateful for the foals return. He neighed at the relief of pain on his hoof. He was soon up and running with the eagle again. The days flew by but me and Dust Stripe didn't stay out of trouble. The worst of that time was when we turned four months old. Dust Stripe and I were walking about the herd when we noticed some thing out of the ordinary. We saw hoof prints heading into woods from a distant field. We followed them into the woods and came out in rival territory. The lead mare spotted us immediately and told her stallion that she was going to find some berries for the herd. She cantered towards us and had a worried frightened tone in her voice. "You two must go now! My stallion is your enemy and will kill you both!" We were too late. The stallion was charging at us and the lead mare stood her ground. We both were warned by the stallion rearing at his mare, stomping her side very hard, her ribs were snapped and bleeding violently. We whinnied for some one's help but the herd ignored us. We had heard of this herd. It is the Shadow herd. They are blood-thirsty evil horses who will kill their own mates if angered. This stallion was getting closer. Just as the stallion was rearing and coming down upon Dust Stripe, Spirit burst out of the bushes, pushing the stallion back into his bleeding mate. The lead mare was kicked in the head by her mate and knocked out. We watched the fight and the stallion back away. We turned to leave but were stunned to see the stallion leave his suffering mate to die. I started to run to her and saw the lead stallion announce her loss and every horse cheered. I cried at that and neeled beside the dieing mare. She nuzzled me and called out to Spirit. She asked to be buried in the woods, away from her dieing spot. At that her head hung and her last breath was taken. I helped take her to the place where four trees surrounded a lake. Spirit swam out in the lake and dug a deep pit. He swam and pulled her off the shore and carried her to the hole, blood stained water swirling behind them. She was buried and mourned. We went to the herd and explained. We went straight to sleep that night.

We did not speak to any one for long periods of time after that. I grew apart from Dust Stripe and soon, when we were one year, I wanted to leave the herd. I announced it to the Cimmaron herd and started my journey away. I was completely un-aware of my distant passenger. I had journeyed many miles away from my home lands. I had traveled south and found a canyon. I was resting in the canyon when I heard shouts. I thought it was just young horses coming but it happened to be a band of cavalry soldiers. They got many ropes around my neck and dragged me to their camp. I saw an H-shaped post and was tied to it. A new black smith came out and clipped my mane. I didn't refuse for I knew it was best. He put shoes on me and he brought out a burning stick of fire. He pressed it into my side and then covered it with water. I was broken in hard but still had spirit in me. Even though I was in this horrid place, some-thing still drew me closer to some-thing great. That night, I unhooked my stall and crept by to the entrance. I reached the entry and ran at full speed. I heard the cavalry mounting horses and ran even faster. I reached the tree line and stopped to look back. I saw that the cavalry was no longer chasing me and slowed my gait to a walk. I walked for a long time through the woods and soon found a cave. I walked into it and slept for who knows how long. I just know that I awoke to the shining sun through some bramble that draped the entrance. I got up and found an apple tree looming at the side of the cave which I hadn't seen last night in the dark. I ate a hardy meal of grass and apples and drank sweet water from a nearby stream. I walked on to find my destiny for three months. I found caves and streams along the way to survive. I had wondered in circles, hidden from the cavalry, and even battled cougars. I had battled in strength and wits against many loners. I started to train myself in battle and rumors were spread by the loners I have fought. I was soon one of the most feared horses in the Cimmaron. Although I had the skill and strength, I knew not to challenge every loner or herd horse. That would be a suicide mission for any horse. I had been looming in these woods for so long that I knew where every horse lived, every herd's territory, and every tree. I taught myself to hear the earth speak and listen to my surroundings. Every herd in the Cimmaron had heard of me and feared me. Only the bravest, most honest, forgiving horses would challenge me. I have never lost a battle and never taken on an apprentice. I had one day wondered into an unknown part of the forest. It had a field covered in oddly spiked buildings. I wondered into the village known as the Lakota village, and soon found myself in more ropes. I was put in a corral and was approached by an indian. He was not the one known as Little Creek but he was young and fit. He circled my eye with black paint that would never come off. I slept in that corral and woke up next to a pile of apples. I ate and saw none awake yet. Like the cavalry, I knew I had to be free. I ran and jumped over the fence and went into the woods. I kept running until I ran into more open fields. I saw these fields and knew I was finally home. The grass was long and fertile with a small section of woods next to it. It had perfect protection from others and the small section had damp sweet grass, a misty and savory creek, and a willow tree for shade and warmth in the seasons. I knew at once I was home. I was surprised to hear a hoof crunch a leaf on the forest. I called out, "Who's there? Are you a challenger?" in a calm voice. The voice answered, "I sure hope not. I would be dead meat." I saw a flash of a gray pelt with a

shortened cherry mane. It was slightly lengthened from time like my mane, and the horse had Indian marks and cavalry markings like me. The stallion walked out with a smile on his face. "Dust Stripe?" He nodded and I ran towards him with tears flowing down my cheeks. We hugged and I asked how he got here. "I was here the whole time. When you left I couldn't stay without my best friend and followed you. I was caught by the cavalry and the Indians with you but you couldn't see me. I followed your training and was taught in your ways of feeling the earth." I cried and wondered how I didn't notice him. We got over some chats and Dust Stripe said something that completed my, our, destiny. "Let's start a herd. Here." I nodded and saw a loner at the edge of the woods. He spotted me and pricked his ears. "Excuse me!" he called, "Do you know where I can join a starter herd?" We were startled at the loner's question but called him over. "We are starting a herd right here. Will you join? We can train you as an apprentice and you can soon be deputy." Dust Stripe said. The loner explained that his name was Kalipae. He was a young horse who was about a year and a half old. He gladly accepted and nickered into the woods. Two little fillies came out of the trees. Kalipae called them over and introduced us. The bigger of the two silver fillies was claimed to be Hisha and the smaller frail one was named Silverstream. I nuzzled them to not be shy, and they soon came out of their shells. Kalipae was dubbed an apprentice to me and we began training in a specially picked area of our herd's territory. I first trained him how to feel the earth under his hooves, to hear the wind talking, and to sense his enemies and allies. He learned fast, and soon was feeling like a true warrior. His little sisters, Silverstream and Hisha, were unable to train until they were at least a year old. Hisha was 8 months and Silverstream was 5 months. With the months passing, Kalipae became a fine apprentice and the fillies soon followed. Finally, it was Kalipae's turn to become a full warrior. He had learned to forage, feel, fight, and most importantly, control his feeling and emotions. The day before the dubbing, a beautiful, dun coat and blue-eyed mare, asked to join the herd. She was walking out into our territory when Kalipae saw her. He listened to the earth spirit and knew she was no harm. He walked calmly to her, and asked her if she needed any help. Her belly was swollen and she was very weak. She had an infected cut on her forelock and a violent battle scar on her left flank. Kalipae helped her up when she almost collapsed. "I need a herd for me and my child." She nuzzled her belly as she said, "child." We gladly sheltered her for her foaling. A single day passed and it was time for Kalipae's dubbing. We gathered under the high rock as I called, "Let all horses old enough to find their own food gather under highrock." We all gathered as I said, "Loyal Kalipae, you are to become a warrior. Do you promise to uphold the warrior code with your life and protect your herd loyally and respectfully?" We all watched as he said a bold, "I do." I bowed my head and he did the same. "Kalipae you shall not only be a proud warrior, but you will become Dashear herd's first deputy. You alone will protect the herd tonight while the others rest. You will maintain your silent vigil until sunhigh tomorrow." The whole herd put one knee down in order to bow to their new deputy. He turned and bowed back, accepting his role. He stood in the rightful place under highrock and began his vigil. The next day, at sunhigh, Kalipae was dismissed from the vigil by a silent nod. His sisters ran up to him and

congratulated him. At the start of the day, Kalipae heard a scream of pain from the mare whose name was Dalshea. She was in foal when he arrived. As soon as the little palomino colt was born, it stood up. He was not frail and weak, but strong and sturdy. I saw and walked over, unable to close my jaws. He was remarkable. Dalshea saw this and said with her remaining energy, "Serin." I nodded at the name. "Our next warrior legend." I gave Kalipae a playful shove when his face looked as if he was gonna burst. "Hey!" he said laughing. We all laughed, including the colt. As he finally opened his eyes, they were closed for the time being, I noticed that he had odd eyes. One ice blue, the other, red amber. Red amber was a symbol of great evil and rarely, hope. I would have to keep a close eye on him. Serin flashed me a look of confusion, and oddly, fear. I knew that if one strong colt is scared, protect the herd. The foals and elders always have the ability to sense the past and future. Some are even gifted in their adulthood. This foal, you can see the visions passing in his eyes, is glimpsing an omen. He is a seer. A one gifted as a teller of ways, a priest, or an evenly challenged darkling. A darkling is an evil spirit. It can be known as a rhymer, gargoyle, or dragon, although not in physical similarities. He is on the outside a horse. But on the inside, he will never be a pure one. He will always belong with evil on one side. He must be trained well. If not, the entire species will be in danger. A small bit of me hopes he learns the ways of the teller, not the darkling that has taken half of his mind. During my thoughts, I noticed Kalipae talk to Dust Stripe. I heard the words, "Ix.....Seer.....Serin." Then everything was black. I awoke in my herd. My vision was blurred. I could hear them talking but couldn't see them. My herd. The same words were going through their minds. Serin knew nothing and was frolicking in a meadow in our territory. I also heard a new name. Asalipae. I saw Dust Stripe talking to a dark bay arabian. I ushered him over and he trotted over gracefully. "While you were asleep, Asalipae wandered by and joined." I stood up jerkily and almost yelled, "How long was I out!" He answered, "Three days. And although you were asleep, you've been gaining. I think you're in foal my love." I looked at my belly, now slightly swollen. I looked up, stunned. "Wonderfull!" I started running around in joy. I had always wanted a child. They had learned quickly. I wanted a day to myself. I walked over to the shady creek near the treeline. I was exploring the small place when a small glint of light caught on an apple. When I reached the apple, another shined and so on. They led me to a most grassy spot, where it was dry and comfortable. I layed down and felt a hard kick in my swollen belly. It soon turned into so much pain. I called to Dust Stripe, my only devoted mate, and he ran to me through the dense tree line and grass. He was in time to see a small bay colt lay on the damp grass. I turned my head and stood up. I turned to Dust Stripe and said, "It's a colt." He was almost overjoyed. He calmed himself and bowed to me. I nodded and he left me. I nuzzled my son up and went to the tree. "Come here Faroh." I said sweetly as not to startle him. He heard his name finally and walked over. And this is where I catch up to reality. Long before my precious daughter. The Chosen Foal.