

The Arabian

by

JustAWriterChick

THE ARABIAN

Rose sighed happily. She had come so far! She had a wonderful mate, LightingRod, and was the mother of two sweet foals! She sighed remembering her journey to America, the west, humans. And her mother. Her sweet, loving, faithful, mum. "Mum would be proud" she thought.

Here is Rose's story, in her own words.

I was born on a stormy night. I was an pure white arabian, a prized horse known for intelligence and the skill to live in the barren desert. All the humans would do was trying to earn my trust. Yea, right. My mother was a wild desert horse and these men had stolen her and broke her spirit with violence, and I was determined to let her have that freedom again. With me. One night, a few weeks after being weaned, I overheard that we were being shipped to... America? What the heck is America? Well, how much different can it be from Saudi Arabia?

The next morning we were prepared to be shipped out. Much to my dissapointment, there was no opportunity to escape. We were dressed in green and gold rugs, with bright gold knee wraps on all our legs. We were led into a rickety truck that rattled when we moved. We drove for what seemed

like hours, and the air took on a salty, dirty taste and smell. Mother told me it was called the "pier" at the "ocean" . Three dirty men opened our truck and gave us some water and oats, before leading us to a giant creature, bobbing in the so-called "ocean".

That next week was living hell. The humans had no idea how to raise a foal, so they put me in a corner of the lower deck, an isolated stall, my mother all the way across the ship. I had no contact, unless you count a little boy who stole my corn and oats, most likely for his horses, but i was too scared to react. By the time we were unloaded from the ship, I was so hungry, and you could count most of my ribs. I was a pathetic sight.

Soon i spotted my mum, and reared up and screamed for her. My mum whinned back and reared knocking down the cabinboy holding her lead rope. She ran over and bared her teeth at the boy holding my rope. He jumped away from us. My mom turned to me, her eyes softening. She nuzzled me, and stood between me and the humans, daring them to face her wrath. Soon a man slowly approached us. he looked kind, unlike the whip-holding men i often saw roaming around the ship. He came without a weapon, or anything to defend himself if mother chose to attack. He was using a silent language, it seemed. He was saying, "I mean no harm to you or your filly". I suppose mother understood, because she slowly lowered her lips, covering her teeth. He slowly lifted his hand and held my mothers halter. "Whose horse is this?" he shouted into the crowd. A tall, regal looking man, violently pushed his way to us. "Those are MY horses! Now hand them over or I'll call the police!" he shouted at us. I laid back my ears, and mother did too and bared her teeth again. "How much?" asked the kind man. "How much for what?!" angrily replied our cruel owner. "The horses. How much do you want for the horses?" said the calm, kind man.

"Fifty."

And with one simple word we were now the horses of a middle-aged farmer in New Orleans, Louisiana. he was a jolly man, and he often talked to us. As he led us away, we turned on to a lonely little road, with us as its only inhabitants. What I had thought in Saudi was very wrong. It was so green here! As we strolled along he said to us, " Welcome to America! I hope you dont enjoy New England too much, cuz we're heading back to New Orleans as soon as New Years Eve is over. I promised my Mother to help out around her house."

"Eugene! I sent you to market to get some chicken and beans, not a horse and a foal!!!" yelled the man's mum. "Sorry ma! These horses need some good ol TLC, and I could use

some horses back at the farm." he replied. His mom said, " those horses are Arabians, hun. Only things they're good for is fancy ridin' or meat!" She exclaimed. "Dont say that ma! Every horse can be a farm horse if y'all train em right!" our new master protested. Mother stood there eyeing the old woman. I could tell my mum didn't trust her one bit. " If you say so, son." She called, walking into the house. Master came and tied us to a pole and stepped away to get something. I took this chance and looked around, searching for a way out. There was a low fence, mum could make it, but not me. I knew she would never leave without me. Master came with a snake-like object. I took a step back, making my rope tight. Mum had told my all about snakes. Fierce. Deadly. Fast. He grabbed the snake around the neck and squeezed. WHOOSH! A stream of clear water streamed out and rinsed off my grubby coat. He sprayed mum too, and she lifted up her head and shook, getting Master all wet!

That night, Master placed a bucket of water and an open sack of oats at our feet. "Good night, my beauties. Sweet dreams" he whispered to us. As he walked by he gave me a scratch under my chin. That night me and mum had the best sleep of our lives! Back in Saudi, we rested fitfully, afraid of the cruel whip-holding men who would feed us, and bathe mother and me when we got dirty. But our new master was kind. I knew we would be very happy with him.... But what about living free, being wild? I fell into a deep dreamless sleep. The day after that was crazy. Drunk men were stumbling through the streets shouting, " 'AppyNewyear!", slurring their words.

Later that day Master came with ropes, halters, and blindfolds. "I know trains are terrifying for horses, so y'all gotta wear these, little beauties.." He covered mums eyes first and then me. He led us down a long dirt road, that turned to gravel. We heard a shrill whistle, and I pressed into master, who had become like a second mum to me. He rubbed the fur under my mane. I smelled smoke, and many people. Master led us up a small ramp and closed the creaky door. He took off our blindfolds, and i saw a cot in the corner, a manger of hay, and a bucket of water. I took a long drink of water and stood by mum. She came to like Master very much, and she nuzzled his shoulder. I had become a strong, noble-looking filly and he had come to grooming my snowy coat whenever he could. He dragged over a stool and began to gently brush my long slender legs.

We where on this train for many hours, but not quite a full day. When we came off, all I could see was people, people, and more people. We walked down and a path cleared, awed people on all sides. They reached out to stroke my beautiful coat. We turned onto a paved road, that amplified my hoof beats. We walked for very long, passing many houses, but we made it to a very large country ranch. He led us to a wooden gate. He opened it, led us inside and took of our halters! My eyes

opened it wonder. So much open space! I ran, ran, ran! I reared and bucked! I rolled in the grass! I did anything but keep still. Mum did too! Master laughed at us for a while and then went into the stable. I got curious and went over. The stable was open into the field! I ran in and saw him throwing hay and straw into a big stall. I heard a curious nickering and a tiny grey-black head peeking out of a low door. " Who are you?" He said to me. " Um, I'm Rose. Hi. Who are you?" He smiled warmly and replied, " Well hello there Rose. I'm Leonard. You can call me Leo. Welcome to the ranch!"

" I've never seen a horse like you, what breed are you? I'm an Arabian."

" I'm a Shetland pony. I've heard of Arabians, but I've never seen one till now. You sure are far from home Rose." Leo said.

Master stopped working and looked over at me and Leo. He came over to me and whistled for mum to come. She trotted in and looked (rather rudely) at Leo. She never did like me playing with other foals. "Meet Leo, Beauties. Hmmm, I'll have to give you proper names after a good nights rest." He ushered us into the freshly made stall and turned the bolt. Mum gave a contented sigh and let her head droop, beginning to doze off. I did the same, forgetting my dreams of escape, happy with my new Master.

"Rise and shine sleepin' beauties. I think I know the perfect names for you two. Bluebell for you, the first flower I ever planted here. Now the first Arabian here! Hehe. And now for you little darlin'. As pretty as a rose you are... Rose! Perfect and beautiful like a white rose. The perfect name." Mother looked extremely pleased. " He got your name right!" I was very happy. My birth name would be my forever name too!

The next few months were rather uneventful. I became good friends with Leo, and mum did too. There was an apple tree in the field, and we feasted on overripe apples when they fell from the tree. The clover that grew in the ample shade of our tree was perfect. I guess you could have called it heaven on earth! But master seemed lonely... He had no mate, no foals, to keep him company. He loved us, but he needed company of his own species. One night, just after sunset, he strolled down the lane and didn't come back until very late. He was very happy, he must have made a new friend! As usual, we led boring but happy lives. A few weeks later, in a cold, cold, day, Master came

in and with him was a pretty human mare! She had a long black-brown mane, and tanned skin. She came over to my stall and said, "So this must be little Rosie!" I perked my ears and trotted to my door. She gently rubbed my forehead. "Absolutely gorgeous, Eugene! I can't believe that man only asked for fifty. She will be great in dressage competitions." She added. Dressage? What's that? "In a few weeks I'll have to get Rose used to the saddle and bit. Bluebell will probably be just a companion mare. Too old to work, and I doubt she'd let anyone ride her." Said Master. The human mare said, "She could still be a brooding mare. I have a few thoroughbreds she might like." "We'll see..."

True to his word Master went to market and bought a bridle, various bits, saddles, and rugs. He started with the "Eggbit Snaffle" as he called it. It was cold, and the taste of metal in my mouth was appalling. He put a lunge rein on it and had me run in wide circles around him. At first it was almost unbearable, but as time passed it became more comfortable. The next day he introduced me to the saddle. It was leather, and very suspicious looking. Master came out of the shed with a thin layer of oats in a huge bucket. I stuck my head in and ate. I felt a weight on my back, and a tightening under my stomach. I whipped my head up and looked on my back. It was the saddle! I was terrified, and screamed and bucked and rolled. Exhausted, and panting, I realized it was no use. "If master put it on it must be good.." I thought. I calmly trotted over to the bucket, and resumed eating. Master got me some water, and let me rest awhile. He then put on my halter and lunge, and made me trot until the saddle was rather comfortable on my back.

We continued with this training until I was quite comfortable with all the tack. I came to learn that master's mare was called Liana. She began to take me on short rides, and one day she took me to her home. It was huge! I met many mares, stallions, and foals. They weren't exactly friendly though. They thought that I was a snob because I was a foreign breed. I met a young stallion that seemed nice. He was grey, with a black lightning mark on his flank. I caught him staring at me twice! But after I saw him, he blushed and looked away. The next day I went home. That day was when my world went upside-down.

Master was dead. When we arrived home there were big flashy cars parked around, wailing a loud, scary, sound. Liana gasped, and started to cry. We galloped to the stable and locked me in with mother. It was the longest night of my (up until now) happy life.

The next day we were moved to Liana's ranch. The lead stallion, Boss, bared his teeth at

us, and two identical twin fillies glared at me. But the strange grey colt peered curiously from behind boss. "Don't mind them Rose, they are jealous of our uncut, luxurious manes, and slender legs." Mum said. "I doubt it." I murmured moodily. After an hour, Leo trotted up with another little mare. "I have found my mate Bathilda!!!" He exclaimed. "How wonderful!" I said half heartedly. "Now Rose, I know you miss Master but, try and make some friends! Sulking will not bring him back." I felt very bad... "I'm sorry Leo... I just can't make friends. I never could in Arabia. And here... I doubt it can be better here..." I said sadly. "It can't hurt to try" replied Leo cheerily. Then he nuzzled his mare and trotted off.

I trotted over to a group of fillies, and one of the twins stepped forward. " Well, well, well. Lookee here Mil, the desert rat decided to say hello." Mel said, in a false crooning voice. Mil shot me a kind, sorrowful look, but as soon as Mel looked back, she snickered at the jeer. I felt my face burning scarlet with embarrassment and anger. "Oh, I'm sorry, did I embarrass you, Little Sandbrain." Sneered Mel. Mil's expression stayed nice, but she laughed convincingly behind her sisters back. "Mil must be afraid of Mel!" I had thought. Every family had a bad egg in the bloodlines, and I guess Mel was it. I was so angry that when Mel turned to sashay away to her friends, I reared up and kicked her. Hard. My untrimmed hooves made a long gash on her flank. She screamed, and I heard Liana drop something in the barn and she ran to see what was going on. Before she could see what I had done, I leapt sideways and ran with all my might. Every horse I passed tried to kick or bite me for hurting Mel, but I was too quick, their teeth biting the air with a loud and angry click. I heard Liana emerge from the barn, and could sense her eyes following me. The big red clay colored horse, Boss, began to chase me, but even his thoroughbred genes couldn't help him catch me! There was a dead end. But I wouldn't stop. Never! The fence was almost as tall as my forelock, but I used a burst of strength, gathered my legs beneath me, and I was soaring over the fence with room to spare! Boss couldn't stop in time! He banged his head and fell down in a haze. Liana rushed over to me, put on a rope and put me in a small stall. I was in MAJOR trouble for sure.

The next day was great! I had thought I would be punished, but it turned out that Liana never suspected me for Mel's injury! She put on my tack after feeding me a sweet mash, and trotted me to an indoor arena. There were many jumping obstacles. "Wow!" I thought. Who knew being bad was so good! LightningRod was waiting at the starting line, with a small man on his back. "You shoulda seen Rose jump that fence yesterday Joe! It was amazing! She never even had lessons in her life!" Gushed Liana to Joe. "We'll see, Llama." Said Joe. In a mock-angry voice Liana said "You call me Llama one more time, and I'll trap a mustang and leave you both in small room!" They both laughed merrily. I shifted my wait from hoof to hoof, signaling that I was

becoming impatient. Liana apparently understood, because she said, "Come on Joe, let's race. Rosie may be a bit unbalanced at first, but just wait, Joe! She's the best." Liana crouched down to my neck and clapped her heels on my sides. I ran to the first jump. I leapt, but Liana's weight on my back made it more difficult. I knocked down two bars. Same on the next three... I was exhausted. Jumping with a rider was so hard! How did LightningRod do it??? Joe and Liana led me and LightningRod to a water trough. They took our saddles, and left us to rest. "Good job." Said LightningRod. "No, it was a horrible job and-" he cut me off. "I meant what happened with Mel, Rose." I was shocked. He was happy the most popular, stunning (but secretly cruel) mare was hurt, by me?! He remembered my name?!?! "Mean fillies have it coming, sooner or later." I calmly replied. "But with Boss there! He woulda killed you if you couldn't jump." "Yea, I guess so" I replied.

From that day in jumping lesson, me and LightningRod's friendship grew. He would visit me at night under the apple tree in secret, without any snooping fillies there to drag him away. We did it every night for 2 months. We then became more than friends... One day, LightningRod did the forbidden. After the Mel incident, everyone shunned me. That day LightningRod looked up from the grass with a determined glint in his eye. He started walking straight toward me, directly through the herd. Every head turned his way, as he loudly, slowly, walked toward me and mum. He reached us, and laid his head on my shoulders. So I did to. Everyone gasped including mum. One paint mare smiled at us. I smiled and blushed slightly. I would always remember that moment. The birds were quietly chirping, there was an apple scented breeze stirring the grass, and LightningRod smelled like leather, grass, and fresh spring hay. From then on, I knew LightningRod really loved me.

After that day we were inseparable. The fillies loathed me, for dating LightningRod. But if they tried to nip me, he would swirl around bare his teeth at them, and they would gallop away. The only horse that was nice to me was Albert. LightningRod was best Friends with Albert. But one night something happened that would change both our lives forever.

I was sound asleep, but I knew something was wrong. I slowly woke up, raised my head, and looked around. My wide Arabian nostrils designed for running picked up a strong, unpleasant scent. FIRREE! My eyes opened wide and I began to neigh as loud as I could, and banged on my stall door. The scent was becoming overwhelming. Every horse woke up, told me to shut up, but then scented the smoke. They all joined in my screaming, and soon I could hear panicked shouts from the house. Me and my mother were panicking in our big stall, and we were trying to break down the door. I peeked my head over, hoping to see Liana or one of the stable boys, coming to get us. But

what I saw was worse. Much worse. Fire. Like a bright dragon monster, it was deadly. Even the breath, smoke, could kill a horse. The smoke was floating in peacefully, oblivious to the terrified horses whose eyes rolled back to show only white. The whole thing was terrifying, the look, the sound, the heat it was giving off. I heard a crash and saw that Liana had taken an axe and broken open the wall near our feed. I screamed at her shrilly, and she sprinted to my stall. She started to grab my mother, but she stepped back, nuzzled me, and shoved me towards Liana. Liana clipped a rope to my halter. I looked back questioningly, and mum's eyes started filling with tears, and draped her warm neck over mine, and whispered, " I love you Rose. Always remember that babe." Before I could reply she pushed me forward, and me and Liana ran towards the gaping hole in the wall. Joe, LightningRod's jockey, followed close behind, leading two unfamiliar, blindfolded horses. We emerged into fresh air, and Liana handed me to stable boy. She started to sprint back to the burning barn. I watched her, praying for her and mum to get out okay. I wish I hadn't watched. The barn roof collapsed in a shower of burning embers. I heard the screams of horses, mum, Boss, the paint mare, Mil and... Albert.

Liana jumped back as the roof caved in. I screamed until my throat was raw. I reared up and shook my rope out of his hands. I ran to the only safe place I could think of. The jumping hall. I ran until my legs were as wobbly as the stirrups were when I was saddle broken by Master. I hid in a shadowy corner, and I was well concealed in the darkness. I curled up like a foal in the winter.

I lied there all day, watching the shadows move around on the sawdust floor. All day I heard Liana, Joe, and many others wandering around and calling my name, but I would not come. Even though it felt as if my mouth would turn to the sawdust that surrounded me, I would not get up to drink. My stomach coiled like an angry cobra, but I would not move from my grieving spot. The next morning, I heard the creak of the hall door and the jangling of Liana's keys. I also heard the sawdust-muffled, nervous hooves hitting the floor. A gentle nicker echoed around the hall. It was LightningRod. I raised my head off the coarse wood shavings and weakly nickered back to him. I heard his shuffling hooves, and Liana unclasping his lead rope. He continued, and found me hidden in the shadows. He walked to my back and lied down, laying his head onto my shoulder, which had turned grey from the smoke of last night. Liana left. "Albert and BlueBell may be gone Rose, but we have to move on. We still have each other, don't we?" He smiled weakly, and I nuzzled him. We both stood up and went to the water trough where we had first met. I drank deeply, and he waited patiently by my side the whole time. When I had finished he led me over to the door, which Liana had left ajar.

LightningRod quietly led me to our apple tree, where our early romance had blossomed. The other horses gave me looks of pity and thankfulness. They knew that Liana wouldn't have gotten there in time without me, but they also knew their early treatment of me was unforgivable. They stayed away out of respect now, not hatefulness. Since Liana ran a breeding farm, and Boss the breeding stallion had died, she brought in a new, arrogant colt. He was all black, and an Arab/Quarter mix! I could not believe it when he approached me. He looked more Quarter than Arab, but there was no mistaking him for a pure Quarter. He walked toward me, and I flicked my ears uncertainly. He lunged forward and nipped me, trying to make me join the other mares. I smelt blood. I planted my hooves in the turf, and screamed for LightningRod, who had been taken for a bathing. I heard him scream back, and before I could imagine, he was streaking toward the arrogant colt who was still attempting to make me join the mares. LightningRod ran into the colt, and flipped him on his back. He stood between me and the colt. "This is my mare, and if I see you anywhere near her again, I will kill you." He angrily snorted. The colt scrambled up and galloped to his little herd. LightningRod nuzzled me and said, "I need to tell you something Rose..." I worriedly replied, "What?" His eyes filled with concern. "Liana wants to sell you, Rose. To the military out west. In the desert."

I was in shock. My eyes welled up, and I shook my head in disbelief. LightningRod nuzzled me and tenderly whispered, "Don't worry Rosie. I'll kill the cavalry men if I have to! Nothing can tear our love apart. Ever." I nuzzled deeper into his thick gray mane, and we stood like that all night. When the light of early morning pierced the thick fur around me, I pulled away my head and sneezed. "Your mane is so dusty!" I joked. "Well, if you didn't always get in trouble during my groomings, I would be cleaner!" He joked back.

The next day was sale day. Cavalry men in pristine blue uniforms with neat trimmed mustaches lined around an empty pasture, waiting to bid on me, and take me away from my home. But then I brightened, remembering LightningRod's promise. I would put on a good show for them. Joe put a soft pink halter on my freshly washed head, and poked many fresh flowers all around it. He put on a white silk rope to my halter. Joe patted my shoulder affectionately, and we stepped out into the pasture. I could hear gasps of astonishment and awe. I arched my neck and high-stepped gracefully. I heard "100!" Ring out of the silence. Then "150!" "No, 250!". The men truly wanted to buy me. Then one especially somber-looking man stepped farther than the rest. Silence. "I will pay one thousand dollars for that desert horse." He calmly, pointedly stated. Everyone was shocked. 1,000 could buy 5 horses! I halted and arched my foreleg. I whinnied at the strange man in the pristine suit. There was more silence. Joe slowly said "One.... Two.... Three.... SOLD!" As the cavalry man approached me, I screamed for LightningRod. I heard him scream back, and a moment

later he was streaking toward us, flying over the fence, and gracefully sliding to a stop in front of me. He held his head high, eyeing the man angrily. "I see this must be the mares mate" the human guessed. "They would make sturdy foals. 1,500 for both. That is my final offer." Joe was stunned. All that money would buy many workhorses. "O-o-of course sir." Joe stammered nervously. "I'll be here with my trailer at sundown to get them" said the regal man, before turning on his heel and walking proudly away.

After the man left, Joe led me and LightningRod to a big stall. We ate the sweet hay and oats he left, and he came back later with two halters, two lead ropes, and a few grooming supplies. He brushed us both until my coat gleamed like fresh icy snow, and LightningRod's like a freshly polished bit. I could tell we looked stunning from the proud look in Joe's eyes. But I didn't care about that. I wanted to see Liana. At least say goodbye before I had to leave... I heard a banging in the courtyard. "Joe! Help me with these crutches!" Liana! "I'm coming!" Said Joe. He walked out of the stall, and came back holding Liana up on one side, a wooden stick on the other side. Her leg was encased in a white, stiff thingamajig. She looked at us and tears filled her eyes. "My two little lovebirds, going out into the world on their own. I'm gonna move out west when my leg heals, and visit you all every day" she smiled at us fondly. I stretched out my neck and she rubbed my velvety nose.

Soon after me and Liana said goodbye, the regal man I began to think of as Sir, came and watched us being loaded into his trailer. It, like his suit, was a navy blue shade of paint. The metal floors were covered in a thick layer of hay, and there were two mangers, one full of hay and oats and the other filled with water. Two workers led me and LightningRod into the trailer. We were tied loosely to two metal rings welded to the wall. I pressed my body against LightningRod, yawned and fell asleep. Many hours later I groggily opened my eyes and lifted my head. LightningRod was sound asleep. I shook my mane and took a drink. I heard a man shout and I swiveled my ears. This time when he shouted it was clearer, "Here come the horses! Get Murphy ready!" The heavy doors behind us were opened and bright light blinded me. As my eyes adjusted, I heard LightningRod wake up. Two different men unloaded us and tied me to an H shaped structure. I heard a man mutter "Looks like we're going into dressage breeding now. Hmf." A middle aged man stepped out of the shadows, twirling a pair of shears in his hand. He was going to cut my mane! How dare he! I stretched to my full height and stamped my foot angrily. He ignorantly grasped a lock of my hair, and I bit down on his gloved hand. He yelled, fell, and rubbed where I had bit him while glaring angrily at me. He left and came back with bandages on his hand. He trimmed my hooves, brushed my fur, and went behind a wall and got strange items. He picked up my feet one by one and nailed heavy metal U's to them. This did not hurt me so I waited patiently. After he

finished, he once again went behind the wall. This time when he came back, I panicked. He was holding a stick tipped with fire. He walked toward me and I reared and screamed. LightningRod shook off the men holding his lead rope, and ran over to me and screamed at Murphy and reared, pawing the air with his strong hooves. Murphy put back the stick, and the others put us in a stall. The hay was tasteless, and the water was stale. I already hated it here.

The next month was surpriseless. Same routine every day, wake, eat, drink, training, grooming, rest, more training, nighttime. But one day, an Indian girl came. She looked delicate, but was proud looking. Sir ordered the men to put her in the jail. That night somehow she appeared in front of my stall. She whispered something and stretched out her hand. I pricked my ears and walked forward. She whispered "Shhhhh" I needed to be silent she unlocked the stalls of sleeping horses and crept back to me. I nudged LightningRod. "Be silent dear, the Indian will help us leave here" I told him. She hopped on my back and rode me through the isles, waking horses. She led us to a small door, but an excited foal whinnied loudly, and lights popped on in each cabin. A tall man burst out of his cabin and saw us. He screamed "The horses are gettin away!" Shouting came out and the few horses still in stalls were saddled as me and the rest of the escapees ran out into the inky black of the desert night. We could hear the men coming after us, and I felt LightningRod jerk back suddenly. I stopped short and neighed desperately for him, but he told me to keep going. I hated to leave him, but I knew he would blame himself if I was caught, so I kept running.

The Indian girl steered me back to her camp but as soon as she got off I ran. I ran until the sand turned to dirt, the dirt to grass, and stopped when I found myself in the forest. I grazed and drank from a small stream, and started running again. The forest started to thin and I saw a grassy plain filled with many horses. They must have scented me, because many mares turned their heads to me and they whinnied to a large buckskin stallion with 4 brown socks. He began to gallop towards me and I pinned my ears back and lowered my head. As he got closer I took a few steps back, and he slowed his pace and neighed friendly-like to me. I pricked my ears and lifted my head. He neighed again and gestured to his herd. He wanted me to join. I nodded my head and followed him to the large herd.

I was strange to them as always, but they were more accepting than the horses at Liana's ranch were. The buckskin stallion I came to know as Spirit, was very brave and would do anything to keep the herd whole. I watched him fight off many cougars, warn us of snakes, and occasionally run off cowboys. Esperanza, his mum, was very kind and very motherly to me. His lead mare, Rain, was sweet and caring. Soon after I joined she asked why I was so sad. After I had left

LightningRod I was in depression. So I told her. "My true love, LightningRod, was captured after the Indian girl help us cavalry horses escape. He made me keep running, but I had so wanted to stay with him, even if it meant those stupid men." I had sadly explained. Her eyes welled up. "Something like that happened to Spirit. But he escaped, and I bet LightningRod will too Rose." I smiled at her. "I hope so"

Since my delicate frame had led the horses to think I was frail, I got quite the surprised reaction when I outran Spirit. He had just amused the foals by racing and letting them win. I pawed the ground and whinnied a playful racing challenge. He smiled and trotted over. We stood shoulder to shoulder, and I stretched my neck, and we were off! I of course led him have the lead. But I widened my stride, and soon passed him! He was so surprised, he slowed down, but quickly caught himself and ran to try and pass me. I could hear gasps of astonishment from the herd, and I veered toward them and stopped. Spirit caught up and smiled at me. "Wow! Arabians sure are fast." I laughed. "You should have seen my mother chase off the stallions back home." My smile faltered when I mentioned my mother. The next months were sad without LightningRod, but that all changed one warm summer day. I was grazing away from the herd but still in sight of Spirit. Then, like a blade cutting through the grass, I saw a gray flash racing toward me. And then another flash appeared, this one buckskin. It was LightningRod and Spirit. I whinnied, telling Spirit to stop, but he did not hear or he ignored me. I reared up and ran, ran, ran! I soon caught up with them, and they reared up, trying to slash each other with their hooves. While Spirit was reading I head butted him and he fell. I whinnied to LightninRod to wait at the tree while I explained to Spirit who he was. He snorted impatiently, but obediently walked to the tree.

I calmly walked with Spirit back to the herd, explaining about LightningRod. He asked me to call LightningRod to the herd. I whinnied to him, and he galloped to me and hugged me so tightly I lost my breath. Spirit asked him for his name. "My name is LightningRod. I'm guessing that you are Spirit. The cavalry talks much about you." Spirit looked a little surprised, but seemed a bit pleased a about his fame, naturally. LightningRod looked around and marveled at the beauty of this territory. Spirit spoke softly, "Rose has told us much about you. If Rose will be your only mare, you may stay and assist in keeping the herd safe." LightningRod smiled and nodded at Spirit.

From then on LightningRod trained all day with Spirit but we slept with our necks intertwined under the apple tree. Soon I got some alarming but still pleasing news. I had grown fat, so I ran extra hard every day. I became moody and snappish at the other mares, even sweet old Esperanza. I only ate the dried out grass, but still I grew fatter. Since I became moody Esperanza watched me.

This just put me ever more on edge. One day as I stood in the sun listlessly chewing the tasteless dried grass, Esperanza approached me cautiously. I looked up from my sad little meadow of dead plants. She stood next to me and tore up a mouthful of dead grass. When she had finished she started talking quietly. "Rose?" She ask tentatively. "What" I replied moodily. She went on ignoring my moodiness. "I think I know why you're not yourself lately. I'm going to get strait to the point here Rosie; I think you're pregnant. You have had the mood swings, and most definitely the weight gain." At hearing this my head shot up, my eyes wide. "By your expression I'm guessing this is you're first!" She said teasingly. "Don't joke about it!" I said loudly and shrilly, making a few mares gaze curiously at us. My mind raced with horrible things, a miscarriage, cougars, rattlesnakes, and life threatening deformities. Esperanza took a step closer and said "If you want to have a healthy foal, first you need to eat more green grass, and let up on exercise. Remember to tell LightningRod tonight." And with than she led me to a lush meadow with only two other mares in it. "Since pregnant mares eat more, and need the greenest grass, this meadow is reserved for them. Now eat Rose, and stay hydrated." And with that she walked to the public meadow and started to graze. When I saw LightningRod on the horizon with Spirit, I slipped away to the apple tree and waited for him. When he cheerfully approached, I solemnly told him "Come here LightningRod, I need to tell you something..." He looked questioningly at me but followed me to the forest. When we when in the shadows, I turned to him and said, "LightningRod, I may be pregnant..." He looked at me unbelievably. Then a wide smile spread across his face and before I knew what was happening, he was rearing and bucking, screaming "I'M A DAD!!!" I laughed at his excitement.

Eleven months later I stood in the moonlight, eating a midnight snack. I felt a sharp kick in the pit of my stomach. My time to foal had finally come. I looked at Spirit's hill, whare he stood all day. He was watching me quietly. I bent around and touched my bulking abdomen, and looked back at him. He must have understood, because he nodded slowly and cautiously. I quietly stepped into the shadows, and looked for a suitable clearing. I soon came across a large cave that looked just right. I lied inside, and felt myself pushing instinctively as the contractions shook my body. I quietly whinnied from the pain. Soon a little colt slipped onto the cool rock. I sat up to admire him, but I felt another body-shaking contraction. Twins! I lay down again and a few minutes later next to the colt there was a strawberry roan filly too. Her dainty pink hooves were so pretty, and the colt had coal-black hooves and his front legs were gray like his fathers. Despite my fatigue, I got to my feet and nudged my foals to do the same. The moonlight illuminated their shiny coats like little jewels. As they struggled to their feet, I admired their long, long legs and broad chests. They would be great racers someday! I heard quiet talking outside the cave. I swiveled my ears to hear the hushed conversation. I led my foals quietly to a shadowy corner and told them not to move. I crept to an outcropping near the entrance and listened to the voices outside. "I'm tellin you Joe, these are

Arabian hoof marks! The mustangs here have much bigger feet!" Liana angrily whispered. "Liana, you miss Rose too much... It's playin tricks on your mind. An Arabian couldn't survive out here. Her genes tell her to watch for cobras not cougars, or wolves. She's probably long dead Llama..." Joe stated. I laid my ears back in anger from Joe's unfaithfulness. I nickered softly. "What was that!?" Exclaimed Liana. "Sounded like a nicker to me..." Replied Joe unsurely. I nickered again, this time louder. I heard the jangle of bits and the creak of saddle leather. They were coming. I called my foals out of hiding. I went and lied down near where I had my foals. Soon two figures on horseback appeared at the mouth of the cave. I raised my head and whinnied at them. "Oh my goodness, my little Rosie had babies!!!" Exclaimed Liana excitedly. "Well I'll be..." Said Joe unbelievably. Liana quickly dismounted from an eerily familiar horse... Mel. I narrowed my eyes at her and she did the unthinkable. She lowered her head in shame and respect. Liana hurried over to me and sat down next to me and my foals. I nudged my little filly, and she slowly crept over to Liana. Liana smiled proudly at my gorgeous filly. I heard her stomach grumble. I quickly got to my feet, and pushed my foals to my teat so they could nurse. The filly's eyes were a deep, emerald green. But the colt have very odd yet pretty eyes. They were a light ice blue. My filly backed up and started to trot over to Mel curiously. I jumped forward and blocked her from Mel. Even though she had apologized, I still don't trust her one bit. Liana put a halter on me and led my and my foals to a small house with a big yard. She put me in and called a vet. Even I knew a mare that had twins has a high risk of internal problems.

The next day the veterinarian came. He was a short balding man in large glasses. He confirmed the health of my foals, and then checked me. He suspected I had a small break in my uterus that led to internal bleeding. I had to have surgery. Liana put my foals in a stall next to mine, and she came back with the vet. He had knives, needles, biodegradable thread, and a suspicious looking mask connected to a tank. Liana took the mask and came toward me. I moved my head as she tried to put it on my face. She put her hand on my neck and looked deep into her eyes. She was telling me this would be for my own good, but I wouldn't like it. I mustered my courage and let her put on the mask. I breathed in, and all went black.

Many hours later I woke up with a groan. I sat up and looked to my side, where there was much pain. There was a deep gash, but it was tied closed with thread. I looked around my darkened stall. A blanket was tied in front of the window to block out light. Sitting in a corner dozing with my foals, was Liana. She had stayed there all day and cared for my foals. I raised unsteadily but silently and crept over to her. I laid down next her and laid my head in her lap. I felt her wake up and she began to gently stroke my forelock. I fell into a deep dreamless sleep right there in her lap. The next morning I woke up to birdsongs and bright sunlight. My foals were curled up at my side and I laid my

head over the colt. "They need names..." I thought groggily. "Well after Lightning comes the Thunder." I smiled at the clever thought. "Okay, so the colt has a name, so what about the dainty little girl...? Hmmmm.... Rosebud...? No... Primrose!" It was perfect! I smiled and opened my eyes to admire my newly named foals. I still couldn't believe I had twins! I gently whispered to their sleeping bodies. "My little perfect babies... Primrose and Thunder!" Primrose must have been a light sleeper because she woke up and looked deep into my eyes. I looked at her tenderly and she cocked her head and smiled. "Mommy?" She asked quietly. I nuzzled her and replied "Yes Primrose?" She smiled again and continued "Is this our home?" She looked a bit confused but still happy. "Oh, no, dear, we live in the wild... We just needed to visit Liana and the humans for a bit." She looked extremely confused now. "What's the wild mommy?" I was alarmed. We need to leave before she gets too attached to here! "It's a wonderful place dear... Endless meadows, sweet grass, many herds of mustangs running free, including your father. He was raised by humans like me but we are wild now." I explained to her. "We will leave in a few days." She looked very happy now. "I can't wait to meet daddy!" She exclaimed excitedly.

The next day I was permitted to go into the meadow. The foals chased each other playfully and snapped harmlessly at each other's heels. I called them over when Liana had left, and found a spot in the fence that they crawled through. Once they were under, I jumped over the fence and we galloped to the Cimmaron. Luckily my foals were fast runners and we arrived in two days. I stood on a tall hill, my mane and tail blowing to the side in the wind. Spirit looked over and when he recognized me he reared up and neighed. The whole herd raised their head and neighed happily at me. But I didn't see LightningRod. I looked at every horse but he was missing. I looked to the forest, the canyon, even the apple tree. When I looked back at Spirit with confusion in my eyes, he galloped over. Thunder and Primrose hid behind my leg. When he arrived I spoke worriedly to him. "Where is LightningRod?!" I said frantically, still peering around the landscape for him. "Rose," Spirit began, "I have something to tell you... And it's not good." He said gravely. I looked at him with tears in my eyes. "He's not.... Dead... is he?" I asked, choking up with tears. "No, no, no! The thing is... last week, just after you left, the cavalry came and caught quite a few of us..." He said somberly. "Um... Was your foal... uhhh... stillborn...?" He asked red-faced. "Oh, no no no no no!" I sidestepped to reveal the twins. "Oh! Im Sorry, I didn't see them..." He apologized, embarrassed. "Hi..." Said Primrose timidly. Thunder pricked his ears and said "Is this our daddy?" I blushed a deep red and said "Noooo! This is Spirit, he's just a friend!" I replied, me the embarrassed one now. "So you had twins! I'm sure LightningRod would be proud of you." He said to me. "He would? No, he WILL be! As soon as these two are weaned I'm going to the cavalry!" I said dismissively. He looked a bit skeptical, but led me to the herd.

A few weeks later, I weaned my foals early in secret. I told my foals to go to Esperanza as soon as I was out of sight. "But where are you going mommy?" Asked Primrose worriedly. "I'm going to get your daddy, my little jewel. I promise to be right back. Take care of Thunder for me." Thunder was sleeping over near a friend in the herd. As soon as Spirit looked away, I seized the chance I galloped silently but swiftly to the shadowy forest. I looked back as soon as I was out of sight as Spirit's gaze slowly returned to where I was, and he took a double take as he realized I had left. He stamped his hoof angrily as Esperanza trotted up to him with Primrose trailing behind her. Primrose looked off in the opposite direction I had gone. Spirit saw her and galloped the way she was looking. Such a little smartie! Esperanza led her to Thunder and stood near them both. I turned away towards the inky black shadows of the forest and ran like I had the day I escaped from the cavalry. But today I was going into the fort, not out of it.

The next day I saw the light of a fire in the distance. A cowboy's temporary camp! The perfect place to be caught! I galloped swiftly to the wooded ridge where I had spotted the dying fire. I tiptoed into the peaceful clearing just as the sun peeked over the horizon. I walked past the sleeping horses, stomping leaves and twigs noisily. Soon every horse was motioning for me to leave but I ignored them. Then I saw a human open his eye. I sniffed various objects pretending to not see him, but I saw him throw a boot at another man and point at me. Not long after after all of them were awake and one tried to creep to his rope and I fake-panicked. I reared and screamed and leapt away. They all jumped up and tried to tack their horses. Soon I was slowly galloping through the forest. Boy, captive horses sure are slow! I could run faster with 3 legs. I led them to the canyon, to a dead end. I screamed with fake fear and rage and bucked and reared. They threw ropes around my neck and I was trapped. I pretended to slip on the slick rock and flailed my legs in the air. One of the horses looked at me apologetically. I pretended to be angry and glared at him and screamed for good measure. And then something unbelievable happened. Esperanza appeared at the top of the ridge and frowned at me. I nickered angrily to her. "Get out of here Esperanza! I'll be right back, I just need to get him!" She sighed, shook her head and trotted to the direction of the herd. The cowboy horses looked at me confused and I snorted at them, angry that my plan was ruined. Hopefully these horses were on my side. We were quite a distance from the fort and we had to stop for rest. The cowboys found a new clearing and tied us to a log. After the humans left the horse next to me spoke. He was a dappled whitish grey with a deep voice. "Are you the Desert Rose?" He asked excitedly. "My name is Rose." I answered suspiciously. How did they know me? "The Arabian?" He added. "Yes." I replied. "Why?" They all crowded around me and the leader of the bunch spoke again. "You're the only escapee! A legend!" He exclaimed excitedly. "Are you going to set us free again? All the foals are grown up, we won't get caught again!" He asked pleadingly. "What?! I'm the only one? I thought others got into the desert!" I exclaimed shocked. The leader got very quiet and looked at the ground. "They did..." He said quietly, " but they

didn't survive." I looked at him tenderly. I knew someone close to him had escaped to the desert, to death. "Well, like you said, nobody will get us this time." I said encouragingly. Everyone smiled. He looked into my eyes and said, "That was Esperanza on the ridge? Spirits mother?" He asked. "Yes. Do you know her?" I asked curiously. "Almost everyone at the cavalry does... We all came from the wild, but not Spirits herd, though." He said sadly. I changed the subject. "Do you know LightningRod?" I asked the leader. "Who?" He said. "Steely gray, about 16 hands, dark hooves?" I asked again. "Oh, that guy. We haven't met him yet. After we all got dragged back to the fort he put up quite a fight. Murphy quit because of him. He's been tied to the post ever since. The colonel's daughter sneaks water to him at night." I sighed, sorry for LightningRod.

Me and the horses chatted all night about this and that. When I heard the cowboys waking up I said, "For my plan to work, I need to pretend to hate you. And you need to treat me like any other random mustang you capture, okay?" They looked at me curiously but nodded. I became very rambunctious as they dragged me into the fort. I reared and was yanked down by... who you ask? Sir. After seeing him I settled down a bit out of fear but still glared and snapped. I looked towards the corral and saw my dear LightningRod. I neighed excitedly to him. He tiredly raised his dirty head at looked at me. His ears pricked and he whinnied excitedly. I whinnied to him, "I have a plan, be awake!" He looked confused but nodded. Sir spoke with the cowboys, thanked then and led me to a stall. It was new, without straw or paint. Soon after I came I heard a heard a familiar voice. Joe?!?! I pricked my ears and leaned my head out the door. It was Joe! He was talking to Sir! Joe looked at me confused. Sir asked him something and Joe nodded. It seemed that Joe was the new groom, after Murphy quit. He came in with a bale of straw. He was completely ignoring me! I nudged his back, I nickered, I ever jumped around. It was as if his face was made of stone, he showed no emotion at all. When he tried to leave I stood in front of the door and stamped my hoof. "You sure are a determined little mare." He said. He rubbed my forelock and pushed himself out the door.

That night I jumped over my stall door and crept to the post. LightningRod smiled and nuzzled me. I knew that rope would be hard to break but I had a plan. "LightningRod, stretch the rope as far as you can." He stretched the rope as far as it goes and waited. I reared up and slammed the sharp edges of my front hooves into the rope. Half the rope had broken off. "Good job Rose!" LightningRod exclaimed. I ignored the throbbing pain in my left ankle and reared up again. And this time, both the rope and my ankle, snapped with a sickening crack. I stumbled as I lowered to the ground and LightningRod held my left side up. We limped slowly over to the stall of the leader horse. I put my head over the door and whispered, "Psssst! Psssst! Wake up!" He raised his head groggily and became alert as he recognized me. I looked sadly at him and told him the change of plans. "My ankle snapped..." The happy expression on his face fell as I told him. "I can't set you free

tonight, but I promise to come back the second my ankle is healed!" He nodded somberly when I finished and whispered "Good luck." Me and LightningRod slowly made our way to the back door. Wow, they really need to close this thing if they want to keep us in here. We hobbled out into the crisp autumn air and made our way to a thin stand of trees. LightningRod suddenly halted. "We need to keep moving LightningRod!" I angrily whispered. "Not with that leg!" He exclaimed. I looked down at my ankle. It was pink and starting to swell. "Well, if we stay here they'll find us!" I replied. "Maybe a little farther on there's a cave" I added. LightningRod sighed and we crept along again. We came to a tall rock structure and found a small cave opening just as the sun tinted the sky pink. "Does it look big enough?" I asked. "I don't know... Can you stand for a minute?" He asked. I nodded. He stepped away and knelt down. "Whoa! It's huge in there!" He exclaimed. "Let's go then!" I told him impatiently. "Can you wiggle through?" He asked doubtfully. "Of course I can! Move!" He sighed again and got up. I slowly knelt down onto the grainy sand. I wriggled painfully into the cavern. I crawled to the side of the entrance and called to LightningRod "Come in!" . He quickly wriggled in beside me and got up in the spacious cavern. "Bury it with sand." I told him. It took a while but LightningRod piled up the grainy sand, blocking the exit. "Good! They won't find us now! The whole stable could fit in here, it's huge!" I exclaimed happily. LightningRod laid down around me. Soon after we lay down there, we heard the thundering of running horses. the cave floor shook slightly. I shut my eyes tightly until the sound and feel of the cowboy horses was gone. "Yes!" I shouted happily. "We're freeeeeeeeee!" My ankle had stopped throbbing and I climbed to my feet. Big mistake. I would have collapsed if LightningRod hadn't leapt up and held me up. I blushed and thanked him. My ankle throbbed worse than before. "That was stupid." I grumbled moodily. "You were just a little too happy." Smiled LightningRod. I rolled my eyes at him. "Should we leave?" I asked him. "I think we should wait to hear them go back." He replied thoughtfully. "We should rest so we can go straight back to the Cimmaron." He added after a minute. I looked sadly at him. "I promised those horses I would help them and I won't break that promise. Besides, my ankle could never heal in the wild. We should go to Liana." I declared. "But Liana is all the way in New Orleans! How do you know we can even trust her?!" He argued. I shook my mane, annoyed. "She lives a mile away LightningRod. After the foals-" "what?!" He cut me off. "Oh my goodness, I forgot! Where is it?!" He said panicky. "It's OK I left them with Esperanza! As I was saying, after they were born, Liana helped me." I calmly explained to him. "They...?" He said in awe. "Yes! I had twins!" I said excitedly. He smiled and nuzzled me. "Now, back to the problem. We are going to Liana or I'm staying here." I declared. "Fine." He said, rolling his eyes. A few minutes later the same floor-shaking rumble of the horses passed again. I stood beside the door as LightningRod dug us out. Soon the moonlight shone through the gaping hole. I slowly lowered to the sandy floor and crawled through the hole into the crisp night air. LightningRod quickly wriggled out after me. I got to my feet slowly and painfully and he held me up as I limped on three feet next to him. When the moon reached the middle of the sky we reached Liana's miniature ranch. This time a few mares dozed with little foals at their

feet. I told LightningRod how to get to the stall. I pushed the door. It was unlocked! I lay down near LightningRod. He stood at the door, guarding me. I fell into a dreamless, fretful sleep.

The next day, I woke from a jolting pain in my injured ankle. I shot up and screamed and yanked my ankle away from a form that lept away. LightningRod snorted angrily above me. As my eyes adjusted to the morning light, I recognised the figure. Liana! I softly nickered and lowered my head in apology. She slowly crept towards me. I noticed that my ankle was wrapped loosely in white gauze. She continued to wrap my ankle and put a splint on too. It was painful but I knew it would help me heal. I got unsteadily to my feet. My ankle felt better already! Me and LightningRod were led to the meadow. The foals peeked curiously around their mothers' legs. Then a gray-white mare with a brown colt aproched me slowly and cautiously. She looked nervous. She softly nickered friendlily. It was Mel! I snorted angrily at her and turned my back on her plea for friendship. I heard her walk away slowly and sadly, and possibly a snuffle. That night me and LightningRod slept in the stall. The next morning the vet came again. He gently took hold of my ankle and examined the makeshift cast with Lightning hovering nervously behind me. "You make quite the splint, Ms. Liana. You don't need me here. Just make sure she has fresh water and green grass. In a month this should be fine." He told her praisingly. But he turned to her and became stern. "But you really should watch this mare better." He gave my ankle a gentle pat. "I can't watch her Dr. Ronson." Liana said shyly. "Well, why not? Why have a horse you can't watch?" He asked her. "Well, she's not mine. Or anybody's, she lives in the dun stallions herd. Last time she left she ran straight to it." She explained. "What?! You tamed a wild horse?! That illegal for anyone except the cavalry or government!" He said angrily and shocked. "No, no, no Dr. Ronson! She was born tame! She was let go." Liana said hurriedly. "I owned her once. She was an excellent show jumper. That is her mate over there," she gestured to LightningRod. Dr. Ronson picked up his bag and said, "That is quite an experience! Most horses released never look back to humans." He said smiling. He shook her hand and left. I walked to the stall door and neighed to be let in the meadow. Liana walked over and clipped a lead to my halter, then opened the door and walked me to the gate. She put me in the meadow and I started to graze. Liana left and went to groom LightningRod. Soon I heard shuffling hooves heading my way and I looked up chewing my grass. It was Mel. Again. I rolled my eyes and went back to my grazing. She spoke softly and tentatively, "Rose... I know what I did at our old home was awful... I'm so sorry... I know you probably hate me, but now I've changed! Ever since the fire... I you hadn't woken us we would all have died... A horrible death. I'm so sorry Rose. I just hope it's not too late for my apology..." She said tearfully. My eyes welled up at the memory of the fire, my mothers death. And I understood. The death of her father had changed her life, like my mother's had changed my life. She had finially changed. For the better. I raised my head, my eyes welling with tears. I smiled tearfully at her and nodded. She beamed at me with tears of joy running down her cheeks. I stretched my neck and hugged her,

like a true friend.

The next few weeks were happy. Me and Mel surprisingly became best friends and grazed together every day, with her excited colt running circles around us. He came to call me Auntie Ro! He was named Nathan. When I told Mel about my foals and my life in the Cimmaron she seemed crestfallen. "So you're leaving again?" She asked sadly. "You could come too... It's an easy jump over the fence." I told her cheerfully. "What about Nathan? He couldn't jump that." She said. "There's a weak board I can kick out, he can crawl under that." I reasoned. "What about cougars, and snakes?!" She said worriedly. "Remember, we have Spirit at the herd, Mel!" Mel looked at me with a smile. She nodded at me and said, "That would be amazing. I would love to come, but we'll see if we can get out successfully..." I smiled at the doubtful tone and smiled mischievously. "We will!" I stated in a singsong voice.

The next night I waited until every light in the farmhouse was off, and then quietly broke out of my stall. LightningRod peered around suspiciously. We quickly but quietly made our way to the meadow. Mel and Nathan were dozing peacefully. I quietly nickered to them and Mel woke with a start. "It's time!" I called to them. Nathan shook his head and trotted up. "Hiya Auntie Rose! Why are we quiet?" He whispered quietly. "We're going to a new home!" I explained to him. Me and LightningRod leapt over the fence and trotted silently to the weak spot. I kicked the board loose, which in the midnight silence, sounded like an earthquake. Thankfully only a few deep sleeper horses were in the meadow, and they only stirred in their sleep. Mel instructed Nathan to wriggle through the hole. He eagerly went through and stood on the other side, waiting for us. Me and Mel jumped over the remaining wooden fence and LightningRod came soon after. We trekked silently through the woods. Nathan looked around both amazed, curious, yet frightened. To a little colt this forest would look so scary, dark, and deadly. When the trees began to thin we picked up pace, with little Nathan struggling to stay next to Mel. When the sun rose we heard a trumpet blast in the distance. I halted and called for Mel to stop. She trotted to me confused. "Why did we stop?" She asked. "We can't go near the cavalry in daylight. Let's find a cave for the day." Soon after we found a deep cave with lush grass growing at the mouth. Me and Mel began to ravenously devour the grass. Being protective as usual, LightningRod insisted to keep watch as we ate. I made sure to leave a big tuft of green grass for him. A few minutes after we all ate we ventured into the cave. It was surprisingly warm, and soon we all settled down for a nap. Soon Nathan was running around again, rejuvenated from the short rest.

We waited patiently until nightfall and then me and LightningRod led Mel and Nathan to the

huge cave we had found earlier. Thankfully, we found it almost instantly. Mel and Nathan crawled in and LightningRod and I set out for the Cavalry. Once again, the idiots there left the door open! You would think they had learned by now... We stepped quietly to the joint stable where the horses were kept in warm weather. We bit the lock until it popped off and silently the horses poured out. You could feel the tension, excitement, and fear in the air. True to his word, the herd was free of foals, like the leader horse had told me. We crept past the cabins, and thankfully the soldiers continued snoring loudly in their beds. When we got out of the door, we began to trot. We sped up the farther we got, and soon were galloping across the dark plain. Me and LightningRod circled the herd when we reached the cave. We told them to crawl through the hole and they eagerly obliged. Mel greeted them inside the cave and Nathan quietly meandered around their legs curiously. As LightningRod and I scrambled through the opening, the sky was beginning to tinge pink. Just as before, me and LightningRod piled sand and rocks to block the small entrance. "Good" I sighed, fatigued, we all lied down and slept. Later in the day we heard the thud of hooves coming our way. It seemed that the Cavalry had gotten ahold of some more horses. One whinnied. It sounded like one from Liana's new farm. The horses froze as we heard them gallop by angrily. We ventured deeper into the cave and found a crack that let in light that helped a short but wide crop of tough grass to grow. We all devoured the grass quickly and soon returned to the entrance. We sat staring at the mound of sand and rocks for who-knows-how-long and soon heard the horses head back slowly. As soon as the horses were out of earshot, we reared and bucked in excitement. The stallions dug up the exit, letting in the light of dawn, and we galloped out and didn't stop until we were deep in the woods. The leader horse excitedly ran up to me and said "Thank you so much Rose! Thank you thank you thank you!" He whinnied. "Haha, calm down! It was no problem..." I said. "Me and the bachelors are going east" he told me and galloped off with the bachelors. The couples raced off south. Me, Mel, Nathan, and LightningRod continued north as fast as Nathan could go and arrived at nightfall. We all reared excitedly and raced down the face of the hill to the herd. Spirit ran up to me. "Rose!" He exclaimed, "We thought you were a goner! Did you save everyone?" He said. "Yes!" I exclaimed. The herd milled excitedly around Mel and Nathan, chatting animatedly. Primrose galloped out of the crowd and shouted "Mommy!" My heart swelled at the sight of my beautiful filly. She had grown so much, she was nearly as tall as me! Soon after Thunder trotted up and smiled. I laid my neck around Primrose's. "I missed you so much mommy" she murmured. "I missed you too babe. It's time for you to meet daddy!" I raised my head and smiled at LightningRod. "This is Primrose, LightningRod. And that is Thunder." I said. I was so happy, I felt that my heart would burst. LightningRod nuzzled our foals lovingly and we began to graze contentedly. We were home and together, and that's all I could wish for.