

WHAT OTHERS ARE SAYING ABOUT *FROSTY*:

"*Frosty* is a thoroughly delightful novel for young readers about a girl and her relationship with powerful and noble animals. *Frosty* is a story to be cherished by horse lovers of all ages."

—*Midwest Book Review*

"*Frosty* is a delightful book that combines the unbeatable combination of horses and drama, and teen readers, especially girls, will love it. From the first chapter, it captures the reader's interest and sets up an engaging plot: how is this girl going to buy this horse and what will happen if she does? For any kid who loves animals, this is a must read. I especially liked the way the author puts both horses and Heather in jeopardy, yet gets them out convincingly without creating a boring or pat ending. The tension goes right up into the last few pages, and I think readers will really enjoy the feeling of being around stables and arenas and the beautiful horses. The writing is so descriptive that you really feel like you are right there with Heather, Frosty and Blackjack throughout the entire book. This would be a great book for anyone who loves horses or animals in general. Great idea!"

—*Writer's Digest*

"Make room on your bookshelf for Ellen Feld's newest novel in the chronicles of Heather Richardson's life with her Morgan Horses. A true delight for teenage readers, Feld brings us the sequel to her first novel, *Blackjack*, with this heartwarming story of Heather and her newest Morgan, Frosty, and their many adventures together. As well as being entertaining, Feld also teaches her young readers about horse healthcare and ownership. A sweet and charming story by this talented young-adult author."

—Christina Koliander, Managing Editor,
The Morgan Horse Magazine

“There aren't many writers around today who can compare to [Marguerite] Henry at her best, but I'll wager that New England's own Ellen F. Feld will be remembered someday in her own right. Feld's latest book, *Frosty* combines Feld's love of Morgans and gift for storytelling. In *Frosty*, Feld has hit her narrative stride that makes the book one you won't want to put down, whether you are 13 or 43.”

—*Horsemen's Yankee Pedlar*

“If you like adventurous stories, get this series!”

—*The Old Schoolhouse Magazine*

“..This is a very engaging read for horse-crazy pre-teens who will keep turning the pages as author Ellen Feld skillfully weaves horse care and training information into a very entertaining story about the adventures of a young girl who loves Morgan horses.”

—*Horses All Magazine*

“This is a book filled with horse action, sure to capture the imagination. Readers will be drawn to the story of the rare gray Morgan Horse and her owner while trying to figure out what rare condition has struck one of the other beloved horses in the story. Ellen F. Feld has taken her knowledge and love of horses and combined them to create a story that teaches while it entertains.”

—*Equiworld Magazine*

“In her second novel Ellen Feld continues to skillfully weave horse care and training information into the entertaining story of a young girl who loves Morgan Horses. Young readers are sure to keep turning the pages to read about Heather's adventures, while learning some of the finer points of horse ownership.”

—Jan Mansfield, Janus Communications, Inc.

"The story is both adventurous and suspenseful."

—*Eventing USA*

"This is one of the most engaging teenage horse books that this reviewer has read in quite a while. *Frosty* is a wonderful sequel to *Blackjack* and readers will be unable to put it down. Wondering whether *Frosty* and Heather will escape the woods of Vermont while at the same time trying to figure out what is wrong with *Blackjack* will keep readers captivated throughout this quick reading story."

—*TriState Horse*

"Instead of typical horse adventures, Feld has come up with a very different type of adventure for Heather and *Frosty* which provides the reader with an exciting and educational view of the challenging and potentially dangerous sport of trail riding. Will Heather and *Frosty* survive their trail riding adventure? Will the vet discover the cause of *Blackjack's* mysterious problem? Be prepared, for discovering how Feld answers these questions will keep you glued to this book. I thoroughly enjoyed this book, and, after staying up half the night to finish it, would recommend it to horse lovers of all ages."

—*Just Horses Magazine*

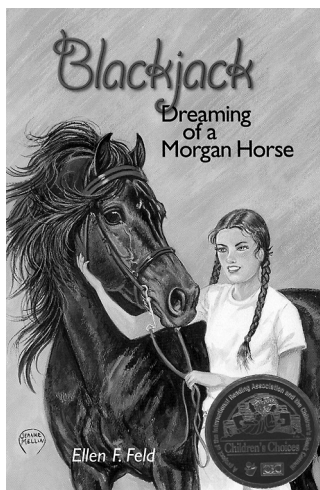
"Once again, author Ellen Feld combines education with entertainment in her delightful story *Frosty*. Readers will be intrigued with *Blackjack's* mysterious illness. As strange symptoms appear, teamwork is needed between veterinarians to solve the perplexing problem. Clinical signs seem unrelated, yet come together in the end to help diagnose and heal a rare condition."

—Ronald J. Emond, DVM,
Candlewood Equine, LLC, Bridgewater, CT

FROSTY:

The Adventures of a Morgan Horse

ALSO BY ELLEN F. FELD



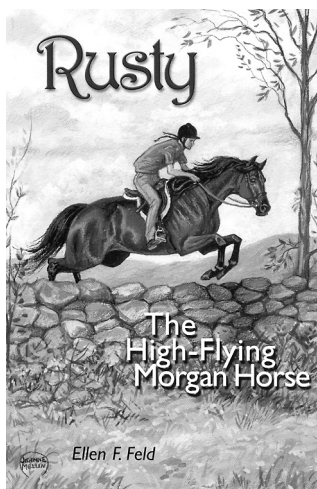
Blackjack: Dreaming of a Morgan Horse

ISBN 978-0-9709002-8-9

An International Reading Association—Children's Book Council "Children's Choices" Selection

"Mrs. Feld has a true gift in capturing the imagination and engaging the reader. It isn't always easy to find a book that will be read willingly by pre-teens! Kudos to Mrs. Feld on her delightful Morgan Horse Series."

—*The Old Schoolhouse Magazine*

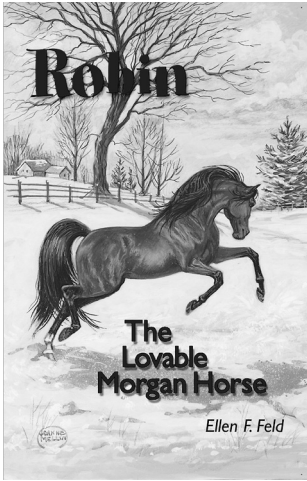


Rusty: The High-Flying Morgan Horse

ISBN 0-9709002-4-4

"Our Family Testers found the book to have such amazing descriptive details that no one wanted to put it down. That's a huge achievement in today's world of wonderful books. We feel the author has incredible talent and love for horses...we can't wait for her next one!"

— Jodie Lynn, CEO of *Parent to Parent* and founder of AddingWisdomAward.com



Robin: The Lovable Morgan Horse

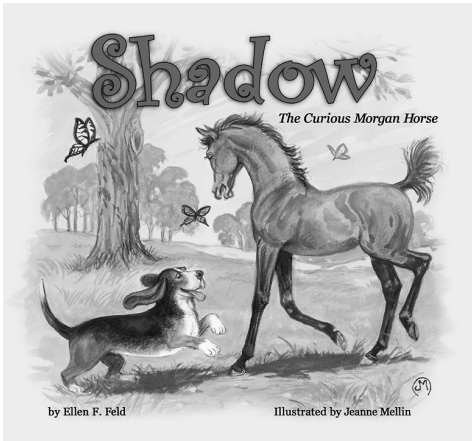
ISBN: 0-9709002-5-2

“Feld uses plenty of conflict on many levels, a string of obstacles, and the characters' solutions to craft a very interesting story with a quick pace. We rated this book five hearts.”

—Bob Spear,
Heartland Reviews

Shadow: The Curious Morgan Horse

ISBN 978-0-9709002-6-5



“Young horse lovers will enjoy reading about the adventures of Shadow, an inquisitive foal, as she investigates the exciting and strange world outside her field. Ellen F. Feld knows how to write for young riders, and her latest book, *Shadow: The Curious Morgan Horse*, is sure to please!”

—*Young Rider
Magazine*

FROSTY:

The Adventures of a Morgan Horse

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To Mom

*For all your love and encouragement
through the years*

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A NEW FRIEND

The rain was letting up, but it was still a dismal day. There were thick, gray clouds filling the sky, refusing to let the sun break through. The ground had been turned into a big, sloppy ocean of mud from the early spring rain, and it was impossible to take a step without getting covered in brown muck.

Heather couldn't figure out why she had come to this auction. It always made her sad to watch all the nervous, unloved horses go up before the crowds as the auctioneer rattled off quick, insignificant facts about each one in an attempt to get somebody, anybody, to bid on them. Very rarely would she find a horse who looked healthy and trustworthy. Instead, what she usually saw were thin, scared animals, quivering with fear. They'd follow a handler up to the front and nervously pace back and forth until they were led away to their uncertain futures. Why did she come here? She already had a wonderful horse, her stunning black Morgan stallion whom she adored.

Blackjack was sixteen-year-old Heather's pride and joy. A purebred Morgan Horse, the stallion

was registered as Gallant Image but had been given the barn name of Blackjack by Heather. They had been through some difficult times together, but their trust and love for each other had always pulled them through. Together they had learned how to compete at horseshows and won many blue ribbons. But it was the quiet trail rides along meandering woodland paths that Heather enjoyed most. It was here that she could have her heart-to-heart talks with her beloved horse and sort out all the problems of the day. So why was she here looking at all the horses crammed into small paddocks?

“Did you find anything?” came a voice from behind.

“Huh? Oh, no, not yet,” replied Heather as she turned around to face her friend, Laura. Laura was probably Heather’s best friend. They had met when Laura came home from college to help care for her dad after his heart attack. Laura’s dad, Chauncy, was the one who had taught Heather all about horses, how to care for and show them. He was also the original owner of Blackjack and had carefully guided the pair through some hard times. While Chauncy recuperated from his heart attack, Laura and Heather spent a lot of time together in the barn doing chores. They had quickly become friends as they discovered their mutual love of horses. Heather looked up to Laura and thought of her as the big sister that she had always wanted and took great pleasure in their similarities.

Having gone to the same school, they loved to compare notes. They'd talk about which teachers they liked, those that they never wanted to see again as well as their favorite classes. Almost without exception, they would agree on every teacher and course. They both had bright blue eyes that seemed to sparkle all the time, even on the grayest of days. They also both preferred to dress in jeans and t-shirts, no matter what the occasion. However, in contrast to Heather's long brown hair, which was always worn in braids, Laura sported shoulder length blond hair. Regardless of the difference, many people thought that they were sisters, which delighted Heather.

"Did you find any good horses?" asked Heather.

"Nah, there's not much here. Do you want to leave?"

"No, not yet. Let's look around a little longer."

The two girls, both wearing rain slickers to keep out the weather, wandered around the grounds for another half an hour until a gentleman's voice announced over the loudspeaker, "Please take your seats everybody. The auction will start in just five minutes."

"Come on, that's our cue," said Laura. "Shall we stay and watch a little or go home?"

"Let's stay, just for a little while. Why don't you go to the arena and watch the start of the sale? I'm going to wander around for a few more minutes," replied Heather.

“Okay, see you in five minutes,” said Laura as she turned and headed towards the arena where the sale was about to start.

Heather walked around the last two paddocks and was about to leave when she spotted a pretty little mare cowering in the corner of the last paddock. The horse couldn't have been more than 14.2 hands, and her hair was matted with mud and burrs. Her mane and tail were a mess too, with so many burrs entangling them that it was doubtful they could be removed without taking a good chunk of hair with them. Still, she was such an eye catching color that Heather moved in for a closer look. Underneath all the mud, Heather could see that the horse was a dark, almost black animal. Upon closer inspection, she saw that the mare was mostly a grayish color with a splattering of white hairs everywhere. The color was darkest near the tail and gradually lightened up towards the head. Looking at the muzzle, there was no black or white hair but only a soft layer of gray. Her mane, tail and forelock were all black and quite long and full. Perhaps the most striking feature that caught Heather's attention was that this horse had the biggest, softest eyes she had ever seen. On the rump of the little horse was a large white label with the number 18 written on it. Heather picked a clump of grass and cautiously approached the mare. Talking softly, the girl slowly put her hand between the metal rails and offered the horse some grass. The shy mare, see-



*The shy mare, seeing the grass,
let hunger overtake her fear.*

ing the grass, let hunger overtake her fear. She slowly walked to the rail, stopping just out of reach. Instead of coming close to the girl, the horse stretched out her neck and moved her lips in an attempt to grab the grass.

“There you go, tastes good, doesn’t it?” asked Heather as the horse managed to get some of the luscious grass.

Seeing that another horse was being fed, a tall, lanky bay horse made it’s way towards the two new friends. Flattening his ears against his neck, the muscular gelding quickly forced the little mare away as he grabbed at the leftover grass.

“Hey, that’s not very nice!” scolded Heather as she pulled the treat away. “This isn’t for you.”

The bold, ill-tempered gelding was certain that he could get some food from this new visitor. After all, everyone else who visited this paddock seemed happy to give him a treat. So sure was he that there would soon be some tasty morsel offered to him, that he thrust his nose through the rails of the paddock, and moved his lips in an effort to grab the grass. Unable to reach the treat, the horse then reached over the rails of the fence, stretched out his neck and once again moved his lips in an exaggerated eating motion.

“No, I’m not going to give you any. Now go away,” demanded the girl. She turned her back to the horse and walked around to the other side of the enclosure.

“There you are,” softly said Heather, as she walked towards the mare, being careful not to frighten the skittish horse. The pretty mare had wandered over to the far side of the paddock, away from all the other horses. As Heather approached, she again picked a clump of grass and slowly raised it to the level of the horse’s face. The cute little mare slowly made her way to the fence, still cautious but having hunger overtake her fear once again. Unfortunately, the noise the grass made as it was pulled from the ground, although barely audible, was instantly picked up by the pushy gelding who was carefully watching this new visitor. He pricked his ears forward towards the sound and decided that he had another chance at a treat. Trotting over to Heather, he was pushing at the rails before the mare even had a chance to get the grass. Heather instantly pulled back, unwilling to give her treat to this intruder. Upset that the grass would not be his, the gelding showed his displeasure by flattening his ears back against his head and lashing out at the mare. First he nipped at her, then he swung his hind end around and kicked at her. The frightened mare quickly trotted away.

“What do you think of that one, Dad? Do you like him?”

Heather turned around to see a boy who was perhaps twelve, with dirty blond hair and a red and black-checkered flannel shirt and jeans. He was pointing at the gelding who had been giving Heather so many problems.

“That’s the one I saw earlier today,” replied the father, an older version of the boy. “We’ll have to see what he’s like before I decide.”

“But Dad,” protested the boy, “that’s the one I want. I really want him.”

The father smiled. “I know you do.”

“I’ve got a halter here, now which one did you want to look at?” came a third voice. An older gentleman, with black hair that looked like it hadn’t been brushed in a very long time, dressed in jeans and a dirty brown t-shirt, approached the two potential customers. He had a scowl on his face and appeared to be annoyed at something.

“That one,” anxiously answered the boy. “Can you catch him for me? I want to ride him.”

“Tim,” corrected the boy’s father, “you’re not riding any horse today. We’re just going to look at the horse you picked. If I think he’s a good horse, then I’ll try riding him. You’ll have to wait until we get the new horse home before you can ride.”

The auction employee climbed over the fence, approached the big gelding and haltered him. Eager for the attention, the horse willingly followed this person to the gate and out into the open where his new fans could look him over carefully. The nasty gelding seemed so sweet now that he was the center of attention. Heather watched the action from her end of the paddock but lost interest when she realized that this was her chance to

gain the mare's confidence. She picked yet another juicy clump of grass and walked over to where the horse was now standing.

"Come on, let's try this one more time," encouraged Heather.

The horse looked at the girl for a minute, trying to decide if the grass was worth the effort. Slowly, cautiously, the mare took the few steps necessary to reach the fence.

"There you go," said Heather, as she fed the horse.

Within seconds, the grass was gone and the mare was looking for more. This time, Heather picked several large clumps of grass and offered them to the horse. Without the bossy gelding around to chase her away, the mare forgot her fear and eagerly ate the snack. Once again, the grass was eaten in an instant. Enjoying this treat, the young horse softly nuzzled Heather on her neck, begging for more.

"Oh, you're such a sweet horse!" encouraged Heather. She turned around and found more grass to feed to the horse. Returning with a third large bunch of grass, Heather fed it to the mare with one hand while she reached out with her other hand to pet the horse. Finishing the grass, the mare stood quietly while Heather stroked her neck.

"You like that, don't you?" asked Heather. "I bet you haven't had much attention in a long time. I

wonder why? Why would anyone want to sell you? You're so sweet and pretty, and you don't look like you're very old. How did you end up here?"

As Heather talked, the mare continued to stand perfectly still. The horse gazed at the girl, her soft brown eyes looking so sad. It was this look that just melted Heather's heart, and that's when the girl realized that this horse had to come home with her.



THE AUCTION

“What? Are you crazy?!” exclaimed Laura when Heather explained to her what she planned to do. “You can’t buy a horse!”

“Why not?” asked Heather. “There are plenty of extra stalls at your dad’s barn, and he said he wouldn’t mind having another horse around.”

If there was one thing Laura knew about her friend, it was that once she made up her mind to do something, it was as good as done. Heather might not have all the details worked out, but if she said she was going to buy a horse, there was no doubt that there would be an extra mouth to feed pretty soon.

“What kind of horse is it?” inquired Laura, deciding that it was best not to try to talk Heather out of this.

“She looks like a Morgan except that she’s gray. I’ve never heard of gray Morgans so maybe she’s a cross between a Morgan and something else. I’d guess she’s about four years old, very pretty, a bit shy but she has a very kind eye. I think that with a little love, she’d be a great horse. Besides, wouldn’t it be nice if Rusty could have a friend to play with? I think he’s kind of lonely.”

“Yeah, I suppose Rusty would be happier if he had a companion to go out in the field with,” replied Laura. With a ten-stall barn and only two horses currently living in it, the farm did seem a bit quiet. When she left for college the previous year, Gallant Morgan Farm had been a vibrant, prosperous farm. There were four broodmares, several young horses that were for sale, as well as Rusty, the retired show horse and Blackjack, the herd sire. But when Laura’s dad had his heart attack, the decision had been made to sell all the horses, with the exception of Rusty, a gelding who had won many ribbons for both Chauncy and his children. It was felt that keeping this special horse might help Chauncy recover by giving him something to look forward to. He certainly loved taking the gelding for long drives down the dirt road where they lived. But all the other horses were sold, including Blackjack. Determined not to be parted with her beloved horse, Heather had managed to keep track of Blackjack, and when the time came, bought him through an auction, much like the one they were attending today. It was this same determination that Laura saw on Heather’s face. What made an auction horse so special to Heather?

“I don’t understand,” continued Laura. “Why do you want this horse? You know nothing about her. Okay, so she’s cute. She’s probably a grade horse too. I’ve heard of gray Morgans but they are so rare that I doubt anybody would sell one. So she’s got to

be either a grade or another breed. And don't forget, if she's here at this auction, then there must be a reason. Why would somebody get rid of her if she's so nice?"

"I don't know," answered Heather. "All I know is that there's something about her, something special."

"What about her gaits? How does she move? Does she have good action or does she stumble or maybe limp?"

"I don't know," admitted Heather again. "I couldn't get a good look at her movement. I watched her walk around a bit and she looked okay. But the one time she trotted, this other horse was in the way, so I couldn't see her very well."

"Okay, so we don't know how she moves. That's not good. And what about paying for her? I know your dad said that you could get another horse, but how much did he say you could spend?"

"Dad said it was okay to spend up to \$900. Do you think she'll go for that much?" asked Heather.

"Maybe," replied Laura. "It depends on how eager people are to bid. Come on, we might as well go find some good seats."

Heather and Laura walked over to where the seats were. Cheap, metal, folding chairs, many of which appeared to have been purchased in the last century, lined the front of the arena. The two girls carefully made their way through the narrow aisle

and found two seats in the second row. As Heather sat down, her chair shifted slightly and she thought that it would tip over.

“Whoops!” she blurted out as she adjusted her weight and grabbed at the chair with her hands. The chair once again shifted under her weight, made a creaking sound and then settled into the dirt of the arena floor. Heather looked around rather sheepishly, hoping that nobody saw her awkward fight with the chair.

The auction had started about fifteen minutes before Heather and Laura sat down and already the auctioneer was selling off the third horse. Although the arena was crowded, it didn’t seem like a lot of people were bidding. That’s good, thought Heather. Maybe there was a chance that she could buy the mare. Unfortunately, by the time the fifth horse entered the ring, people were getting into the excitement and beginning to bid. Up and up the prices for each horse went until lot twelve, an absolutely stunning dark bay Quarter Horse, was led into the arena.

“Here we have Casey’s Treat, an eight-year-old Quarter Horse gelding that has done it all. He’s the one you want folks!” exclaimed the auctioneer, a slightly rotund gentleman wearing blue jeans, a denim jacket and cowboy hat. “This handy horse has won in the western and english rings but has really proven his mettle in the reining pen. If you’re looking for a good reining horse that can score consistently high in the show pen,

than start bidding! Now who will give me \$5000? Do I hear \$5000?"

"Here!" hollered one of the auction workers as he pointed to a woman in the fourth row. The two friends turned to see just who was bidding so much. A middle-aged woman, perhaps around forty-five, dressed as though she belonged at a fancy party rather than a horse sale, was smiling. The horse was led up and down the aisleway in front of the crowd, and when the bidding momentarily stopped, the auctioneer had one of the handlers quickly saddle and bridle the horse. Another helper, dressed in riding boots and jeans, climbed aboard the magnificent animal and, as the bidding once again began to jump higher, asked the horse to spin. Instantly, the horse effortlessly spun in place, making four quick circles. As he did so, his long mane and the ends of the reins both flew out away from him. Then he stopped, and just as effortlessly, spun four times in the opposite direction.

"That's really neat!" shouted a young boy sitting in the front row.

Immediately after spinning, the horse started cantering and, within the tight confines of the auction space, was able to complete two small circles before he was asked to stop. The elegant animal stopped so fast that he left marks in the dirt where his back feet had dug into the ground. Standing still for just an instant, the horse then swiftly backed up, perfectly straight for at least ten feet.

This latest action really got the bidding going and Heather and Laura continued to watch as the amount quickly reached \$8000.

“Wow! Do you believe that?” asked Laura when the sale closed at \$8250.

“I sure hope the mare I like isn’t a reining horse!” laughed Heather, knowing that such high prices were well out of her range. “Dad would kill me!”

“Nah, he’d just make you sleep in the barn with the horses. But then you’d probably like that, wouldn’t you?” teased Laura.

The auction continued, and while some horses went for a lot of money, most sold rather inexpensively. The majority of the horses at this sale, the scared, thin, trembling ones, didn’t warrant a second look from most people. When lot seventeen came in, Heather recognized the annoying gelding that had tried to steal the grass from her.

“Here is a nice, child-safe riding horse for some lucky bidder. My form says that the horse is nineteen and has been used by a summer camp for the last three years. Who’ll start at \$1500?”

The audience was silent.

“Do I hear \$1500?” bellowed the auctioneer.

Again, silence.

“How about \$1200? Do I have \$1200?”

More silence.

“Come on folks, this is a nice horse. Okay, let’s have \$800. Who will start the bidding at \$800?”

“\$500!” hollered somebody from the back of the ring. Heather turned to see the father of the young boy who had looked at the gelding earlier. Next to the man was his son, with a somewhat nervous expression upon his face. He obviously wanted this horse and didn’t want anybody else to bid.

“I have \$500. Do I hear \$600? \$600 anybody?” pleaded the auctioneer. But no matter how hard he tried, the auctioneer couldn’t get anybody else to bid.

“Sold for \$500 to bidder number 61.”

“Oh no, I forgot,” said Heather in a panicked voice. “Did you get a number?”

“No, I thought you’d get one,” replied Laura.

“Shoot. Now what do I do? My mare is the next lot.”

“Just bid, I’ll go get one,” said Laura as she jumped up from her seat and disappeared into the crowd.

Now Heather wasn’t just excited, but nervous also. She was no longer able to sit quietly in her old, uncomfortable chair. Instead she moved around, first sitting on her hands, then slouching, once again using her hands as a seat and finally sitting at attention as she saw the little gray mare being led in.

“Here’s a cutie for you, folks,” bellowed the auctioneer. “I don’t know a lot about her, only that she’s just a youngster and hasn’t been worked

much. My form says she's a registered Morgan, but I've never seen a gray Morgan so maybe that isn't right. But that doesn't matter, as she's so nice. You don't want to miss this chance to get a nice, four-year-old mare and train her the way you like. Who wants to start the bidding at \$1500?"

Just like the previous horse, nobody seemed particularly interested in this animal. Heather looked around nervously, trying to catch a glimpse of the first bidder. But she didn't see a single hand rise, or a single voice shout out in excitement. The horse seemed nervous too as she paced around and around, unwilling to stand still. The handler tried to get her to pose in front of the crowd, but she refused, instead giving out an ear-piercing cry as she began to paw the ground.

"Are you sure you want her?" asked Laura as she returned to her seat. "She seems pretty antsy to me. Oh, I forgot, here's your number."

Laura handed Heather a small piece of white cardboard with the number 82 handwritten on it and a large tongue-depressor glued to the back side which apparently was to be used as a handle.

"Come on folks," interrupted the auctioneer. "What are you waiting for? You won't see a better horse today, and you're going to kick yourselves when you have to drive home without this handsome horse in your trailer. Do I hear \$800? \$800 anybody?"

Laura looked at her friend. "Aren't you going to bid? What are you waiting for?"

"I'm going to wait until the very last minute. I want to get her for the lowest price possible."

"Well, don't wait too long or you won't get her at all!"

"\$450!"

Both girls turned to see who had just bid. A middle-aged man sitting several rows behind them, with greasy, shoulder length black hair and whose large stomach was probably the result of far too many trips to the local fast-food restaurant, had his hand raised.

"I have \$450! Do I hear \$500?" shouted the auctioneer who seemed relieved to have finally gotten a bid. "Hey Jim," he continued, "tack her up and let's show these folks what a nice riding horse she is."

There was a brief pause in the action as one of the assistants got up from a nearby seat to do what he was told. Jim was a man of perhaps thirty, with long, matted hair like so many of the other workers at the auction. He wore a blue and white flannel shirt that was worn through at the elbows, jeans that were worn through at the knees and boots that needed to be thrown out. The young man looked slightly annoyed at the thought of riding the horse, but he obediently grabbed a western saddle that had been lying on the ground near the auctioneer and rather roughly tossed it onto the

young mare's back. The frightened horse jumped slightly as the saddle landed on her back and her ears flattened against her neck to show her displeasure. Jim didn't bother to put a blanket between the saddle and the horse, and as soon as the saddle was on, he turned towards the auctioneer with a quizzical look on his face.

"Where's her bridle?" asked the assistant.

"Oh, here, use this one," replied another helper from the sidelines. An old, worn-out looking bridle was tossed to Jim, the assistant trying to tack up the horse. Jim reached for the bridle, but missed it and it flopped to the ground. He picked it up, brushed off some dirt from the piece of equipment and returned to the mare. In less than a minute he had the bridle on the horse and had climbed aboard.

"Okay, now folks, watch this pretty little mare and let's get the bidding going!" shouted the auctioneer as he tried to get the audience excited about the horse.

Jim had every intention of making the horse look as enticing as possible, but the little mare had other ideas. The bit that had been forced into her mouth was old, rusty and had several sharp edges along the inside that cut into her mouth with each pull of the reins. The mare pinned her ears back, lowered her head and started to back up in an attempt to escape from the pain that the bit was causing.

"I think she's going to buck!" exclaimed Laura.

“No, look at her face,” said Heather. “She doesn’t look mean, she looks scared. I bet that rider is pulling too hard on the reins. Or maybe the bit is one she’s never had in her mouth before. Look, it’s a curb bit. Isn’t that kind of rough for a young horse?”

“It can be, if used wrong. But then again, pretty much any bit can hurt if used wrong,” replied Laura.

With a couple of good, hard kicks, Jim managed to get the mare walking forward. She walked slowly, cocking her head towards the crowd and cautiously looking at them. At one point she stopped, raised her head and snorted loudly at somebody sitting in the front row. But a quick kick from her rider got her going again.

“Okay folks, do I hear \$500? Come on now, she’s a bit green but we can all see that she’ll make a great riding horse with a little work. And what a broodmare she’ll make in the future! \$500, do I hear \$500?”

Deciding that it was time to act, Heather raised her hand.

“\$500, do I hear \$500?” continued the auctioneer. Apparently he didn’t see Heather’s hand.

“Here, here!” shouted the girl, anxious to get her bid heard.

“We have \$500 over there,” yelled the auctioneer, looking at the far end of the arena. Everyone,

including Heather, turned to look at the bidder. A young man, perhaps in his early twenties, had his hand up and was smiling.

“We have \$500, do I hear \$600?”

Heather’s hand shot up in an instant and this time she didn’t wait. She yelled out “here” as loudly as she could.

“I’ve got \$600 over there,” continued the auctioneer, this time looking at Heather. “How about \$700? You know she’s worth the price,” encouraged the auctioneer, turning his attention to the other two bidders.

The middle-aged man shook his head back and forth to signal his desire to stop bidding. The auctioneer then turned his attention to the younger gentleman.

“How high are you going to go?” whispered Laura.

“I don’t know. I can’t go much higher.” Heather looked at the mare, who seemed to have relaxed just a bit. Her rider gave the horse yet another kick and the mare broke into a tense, nervous looking trot. When she got to the end of the ring, she stumbled as she tried to turn tightly and trot at the same time. For her effort, she received two heels snapped sharply into her sides.

\$650!” hollered the young man who was bidding against Heather.

“Don’t up the bid right away. Wait till the very last minute,” advised Laura.

“\$700?” asked the auctioneer, looking at Heather.

“\$700!” came a woman’s voice. Heather turned to see a well-dressed woman, several rows behind her.

“I have \$700, do I hear \$800?” asked the auctioneer.

Silence filled the arena. Somebody coughed. Heather’s right leg started doing a quick little up and down motion, a habit that frequently showed itself when she was tense.

“What should I do?” she whispered to her friend.

“Wait, wait,” came the reply.

“\$800, \$800. Do I hear \$800?”

A short pause that seemed to last forever followed.

“Going once for \$700...”

“\$800!” shouted Heather.

“Twice, wait, we have another bid. \$800 from the young lady. Anybody else?”

Another brief pause followed as the auctioneer looked into the crowd, trying to find another bidder.

“I have \$800. Do I hear \$850?”

Heather’s stomach twisted in knots, awaiting the outcome.

“\$800, going once, twice, sold!” shouted the auctioneer as he slammed his gavel down on the podium. “Your number please.”

Heather held up her little, hand-made placard.

“Lot number eighteen, sold to bidder number 82 for \$800. Thank you ma’am. Now look what we have here, a gorgeous bay Thoroughbred that I’m told easily jumps four foot fences and has been started in training-level dressage.”

Heather and Laura got up and began to make their way to the office. The little mare was led away, presumably back to the small pasture where Heather had first met her.