

A Horse called Baltimore

“Nathan Rodgers ,Place your hand on the Bible. Do you swear to tell the whole truth and nothing but the truth ,so help you God?” Nate replied. “I do.” Jim Swinson, his court appointed Public Defender said, “ Nate, you understand that you are charged with armed robbery and Assault with a deadly weapon. In your own words, tell the court your side of the story.” Judge Adams was presiding said, “Just a minute Counselor, we’re covered up today. Let me read the charges.” He then took a few minutes to review the statement in his hands and finally looking at a nervous Nate he said, “Ok proceed, Mister Rodgers.”

The man being tried was Nathan Rogers, a white 26 year old, unemployed alcoholic drug dealer and small time thief. A homeless derelict from the ghetto of Baltimore Maryland. His record indicated multiple arrests for a number of misdemeanors involving drunkenness and disturbing the Peace. He was suspected of being involved with numerous burglaries, but never convicted. This time was different. Witnesses had identified and the Police had arrested him as a gang member involved with the armed robbery of a liquor store on down town Baltimore Street. The robbery involved a theft of 800 dollars in which one of the gang members shot and seriously wounded Bob Walters, the Store owner. His lawyer , Jim Swinson, had recommended that he plead Guilty while under the influence and throw himself on the mercy of the court. The store owner was expecting a full recovery, but life time disabilities might develop as a result of the injury. Should that happen, Nate and his accomplices could face fines and imprisonment that would destroy their lives. Jim said, “ Nate, you’re in pretty tough. The best you can hope for with Judge Adams is a lenient sentence. As it stands, you’re charged with complicity, and you could be looking at ten years. Clean yourself up as much as you can and please maintain a courteous and humble attitude when speaking to anyone during the

trial. I'll do the best that I can. Good luck." Nate had spent the last two years kicking himself , for joining the street gang. He knew that it was trouble, but what the heck, his life was miserable anyway. Sitting in a jail cell for five long months was Hell, waiting for his trial . He didn't want to spend his life there. Finally his day had come and here he was.

Nate replied, " Yes! Yes sir, your Honor; on the night of the robbery, I was told by Bickle, he's the Chief of the Pratt Street Gang; that I was to help in the robbery of Walter's liquor store . Bickle was carrying a gun and when Walter's tried to get his gun from under the counter, Bickle shot him. Walter's fell behind the counter. I thought he was dead. I ran to the cash register and grabbed the bills ,then beat it out of the store. Two Cops grabbed me as I got outside. There was more shooting going on in the store. The Cops handcuffed me and hauled me to Jail. They took the money I had stolen and booked me. That's all I know. I heard in jail, that Bickle had been shot and killed."

Swinson said, " Your Honor, I want my client to explain to the court why he was a member of the Pratt Street Gang and why he was there assisting in the robbery. As you know ,your Honor; Mister Rogers has Pleaded Guilty with extenuating circumstances. He asks for mercy of the Court and permission to plead his case ." Judge Adams said, "Counselor, I have a very full schedule today and this appears open and shut. Your client has already confessed and pleaded guilty. Ok, Go ahead mister Rodgers, but keep it brief."

Nate said, "Your Honor my story ain't no different from a thousand others in Baltimore. Broken home , single parent, dropped outta school and joined a Street Gang. My Momma died two years ago. I slept around with friends and other members of the Gang. Stealing to git by and heavy into alcohol. Did some drugs, but didn't get hooked. Followed orders from the Gang leader and held up my end. When I was told to join in this robbery, I did as I was told. Everyday you hear of some gang member gittin shot and killed. That's the reason you don't refuse. Lookin back, it's all my own fault and I can't blame nobody else. I never should have joined a gang, but that's the way it is in Baltimore. I've got no excuse. Thank you your Honor."

Judge Adams said, “ Yeah, that’s the way it is in every big city in this country. Not just Baltimore. Mister Rodgers, I’m not going to pronounce sentence today . Councelor, have Mister Rodgers back in Court next Tuesday for sentencing. Next Case please.”

Nate was disappointed with the Judges action and said later to Swinson, “ Damnit, I wanted to get it over with and get on with what I gotta do. Now I gotta wait another damn week!” Swinson said, “ Nate , take it easy. You did a great job in there. I told you to rattle off your story . You did a great job and didn’t get any cross fire from the Judge. Don’t go knocking the next week. It’s really a good thing that he wants to go over and study your case thoroughly. That’s in your favor. He could have just thrown the book at you and moved on to his next case. I think you hit a good nerve with him so just hang on another week and don’t get down or angry, You may have saved yourself a couple years in prison today. You did a very good job.”

Nate had to console himself with those words and go back looking for something in jail, that he hadn’t read more than twice. Maybe he’d try that Bible, nobody seemed to read it, but it sure looked like an awful lotta pages in small print. Nate settled for an old adventure Magazine. Maybe there was something in it he had missed the first two times he read it. Tuesday finally arrived and following the preliminaries, Judge Adams said, “ Nathan Rodgers you have been found guilty of complicity in an Armed robbery and Assault with a Deadly weapon. Because of your circumstances and involvement, I’m reducing the charge to Accomplice in an armed Robbery and you are hereby sentenced to 5 years in prison with options for parole. Next case please.”

Nate was heartbroken thinking “ 5 years, My God , I’ll never get out!” he was shaking his head in despair and Swinson said, “ Nate , I don’t know what you expected, but you got off easy. You practically won your own case. 5 years with possibility of parole. Man you should count yourself lucky. That’s the lightest sentence I’ve ever seen Judge Adams give for any kind of robbery. Mister you should be the happiest man in Jail today.” Nate didn’t feel happy, but it was a relief to have

the trial over. His thought came out in words as he asked, “What’s next Mister Simpson? Whatta they gonna do with me now?” Simpson replied, “ Nate , it’s not a whole lot different than if you went into the Army in some respects. They’re gonna assign you to a prison facility for a medical check up , then you’re gonna be assigned to a Prison confinement facility. You’ll be transported there and be indoctrinated to the rules and regulations of prison life. At this time most all of the prisons east of the Mississippi River are full. Since you have no family , they will send you anywhere there is an opening. You’ll probably be sent to one of the western states.

Ten days later Nate was being checked into The Colorado prison in Canon City. He found it to be full of inmates like himself, convicted of all sorts of Felony type crimes. He was selected for a labor program that was primarily food preparation. Early on, he decided that resentment, bitterness and anger would get him nowhere. “Do your work, obey the rules, and don’t complain.” This became his motto, it made things easier for him . Nate was big enough at six feet and one hundred eighty pounds to handle any kind of manual labor tasks. His willingness to please, made him a favorite of the guards, but he was resented by some of the other inmates. Their insulting comments, he let pass and soon he was accepted for what he was. Most wouldn’t mess with him because of his size and the story that he was involved in a robbery shooting.

Prison life was a boring dirge and Nate volunteered for anything that would change the routine. Some of the inmates were involved with the Colorado Wild Horse Inmate program and frequently talked about training horses. Nate was interested , but only as a topic of interest. He had never been around a horse in his lifetime. It seemed that a number of inmates had attempted to get into the program , but only a very few were accepted. Nate volunteered for a labor group that would be doing training on cleanup equipment. He wanted to learn how to drive a tractor and anything else that they would permit him to operate. It was during this type of work that he learned how to stack hay bales. Nate unlike a number of others, really enjoyed the

opportunity to throw bales of hay around. Bud Mackin was the Manager of the Yard facility and frequently stopped Nate and made him take breaks. He said, "Young man, you don't have to kill yourself working off your anger out here. Sit a bit and let these other men work awhile. What do they call you, I see you're tagged as inmate Rogers." Nate answered, "Nate sir, my names Nathan and I'm not working off anger. I love being able to get out here and do something. I enjoy the work. It sure beats sitting in a cell or out in the Main Yard all day. I feel really good after a hard day's work." Bud said, "Well Nate, I'm glad to have you working here. I wish I had more inmates to deal with that have your attitude. We have a lot going on here and willing to work attitudes sure makes things easier. We have about twenty wild horses in training and they're trouble enough. You ever have anything to do with horses?" Nate replied, "No sir, I've never been near a horse." Bud asked, "Would you be interested in working with the horses? We are in need of a few more trainers." Nate laughed and said, "Mister Mackin, I don't know a thing about training horses or anything else. I'm sure there must be inmates in here that are familiar with horses. I enjoy the work out here and I'll do everything I can to keep working out here, but being around horses. I don't know." Bud asked, "Would you be willing to spend a day with me, while the horses are worked. You won't have to do anything, but just see how you take to the training and being near horses." Nate replied, "Mister Mackin, I'm willing to try anything, to stay outta that cell and the Big Yard." Bud said, "Good! Tomorrow I'll have you assigned to me for the day and we'll see how it goes."

Nate was excited about being near horses and eagerly followed Bud the following day. By the time lunch came around, Nate was brushing and leading horses around the barn and corral areas. Bud said, "Nate, I was hoping that I read you right. It's easy to see that you have taken a liking to horses. Now that you've had an introduction, would you be interested in training to become a Horse trainer in our Program?" Nate was overjoyed, but apprehensive and said, "Mister Mackin, I'd love to give it a try, but I may not be able to do it." Bud said "Good, I'm gonna have you work with inmate Jay Coulter through the

program training of one of these wild Mustangs. You'll probably have to do most of the horse training under Jay's direction, but he's very good and when he says you're ready , we'll give you your own mustang to train. Nate , it's hard work and sometimes you'll probably wish you had never taken on this job, but I like your attitude and you don't seem to be afraid of the horses. I've had to turn a lot of boys away for mistreatment of animals and I won't tolerate any abuse what so ever. These are all wild animals and if you're careless around any of them, you can easily get hurt. Come along, I'll introduce you to Jay."

Jay was glad to meet Nate and said, " Nate the first thing I need you to do is just listen and pay close attention. If there's any question about anything ask me . Don't try anything on your own. Mustangs can be easy and some can hurt you. You'll get a few dings and rope burns working here, but if you're like me, you'll come to love your work. Ok. ? So let's get right to it. To begin with, this horse I'm working with is named Doctor. He earned his name by sending a couple of inmates to sick bay, so early on he picked up a bad rep. He looks like he's half asleep all the time, and that look fooled folks. He exploded a few times running over his trainers. When I got him, I took him right back to the Basics for four weeks and now he pretty close matches his looks. He'll be sold at our next BLM Auction. He's gentle broke and will just get better. We'll be trail riding him every day till then, getting him used to any spook boogers around the Prison Facilities. You could probably ride him, but Bud says to start your learning to ride on old Bobby. He's old and dead broke gentle. Anyone that can't ride him, should be walkin for sure."

So began Nate's introduction to working in the Colorado Wild Horse Training Program. Eight hours everyday, it was work that Nate looked forward to do and every day was a new and exciting experience for him. Nate actually came to resent any duties assigned to him that took him away from the horses. His progress was outstanding and Jay gave Bud a go ahead for Nate to be assigned a Mustang of his own for training. Nate was over the top with pride and satisfaction. He couldn't wait for the horses to come in and select one

to train. Bud advised him , “ Go slow Nate when you first come in contact with a wild horse. They can hurt you and some can be vicious. It takes a special person to accept the actions of wild Mustangs. They’re natural fighters and for thousands of years their only means of protection is flight. They will run over you and even use you for footing if necessary, so always be aware of these characteristics and take every care to protect yourself. They have to accept you and your training methods, if you ever expect to gain their confidence .”

“ There can be absolutely no cruelty to the animal. Just remember whatever happens simply means this: if the horse refuses your requested action or performance, then you asked for the response wrong or asked for the wrong response. Back up and rethink what you’re doing. There’s always an easy and correct way to reach your goal. Nate , I’m gonna help you select a horse for training, because I’ve dealt with a lot of them and I’ve learned to read their character and disposition a little bit. I know you’ve gone through all of this with Jay, but now you’re gonna be on your own. There’s thirty five Mustangs coming in from Arizona next week and we’ll see if we can find one to match a Rodgers from Baltimore.”

Nate was thrilled. He anxiously waited for the horses and thoroughly cleaned his training pen and checked over all of his equipment. Each trainer was required to care for and maintain all of their own equipment. Most of his was in new condition, except for the saddle. It was a Hand me Down from one of the senior trainers. Even in prison , there was a pecking order and Nate was at the bottom . Nate didn’t care. Every day he waited eagerly for the Horse vans. His horse was somewhere on the road to Colorado.

Bud was almost right , but the mustang shipment that came to Colorado was from the high desert of Nevada. These horses were a little larger and stockier than those normally shipped in from Arizona. Unknown to Nate or anyone else a nondescript bald faced roan colored gelding was part of the load. This roan, as a stallion, had been leader of a small harem of six mares when the noisy helicopters descended on them scaring them into a terror driven stampede of fear away from

the monsters in the sky. As they raced south away from the fearful birds, other groups were added until sixty horses were driven into the wings of a horse trap. Roan raced in fear to the seven foot fence closing the trap and raced around looking for an escape. There was no escape and twice he attempted to jump the fence, but the crowd of horses prevented him from making a running attempt and both efforts failed. His second attempt almost cost him his life, when he tore a large part of his front left hoof off. Fortunately, he didn't break a leg which would have immediately sealed his fate. He would have to be put down. The injury was bad, but with proper care would heal. By nature and disposition, roan was a fighter, however ; the crippling of his left foot soon caused him to settle and stand docilely among the large group .

The AJ Collins Stock company had secured the government contract to trap the horses and separate all of the stallions for freeze branding and castration. When Roan came to his senses and recovered from the effects of tranquilizers, He wore a neck branded code which identified his sex, his origin, and age at branding. He also, was no longer a stallion. Jim Reynolds was the manager of this operation and recognized right away that Roan was crippled somewhat. His instructions from AJ were to provide a group of twelve geldings for shipment to the prison in Colorado for the Wild Horse Inmate Program. Unfortunately, their gather was short and only nine were suitable for the program. Jim was concerned about the Roan, but each horse represented two hundred dollars for AJ. Roan although unsound was loaded for shipment. Jim was thinking, "After all a dollar is a dollar and horses were occasionally crippled during shipment." Roan headed for Prison and two hundred dollars went into AJ's pocket.

Roan had a good ways to go for healing and his noticeable limp would cause an immediate problem at the prison. The livestock trucks made a straight through run because handling a bunch of wild mustangs unloading into corrals and reloading for transport always caused injuries and problems. Roan was constantly in motion during the trip and although he suffered no further damage, his foot became

more painful . Upon arrival and unloading Bud upon seeing Roan limping immediately cut him from the herd and into a separate pen. He said to Nate, “I know you don’t know a whole lot about horses yet, but that bald faced Roan looks bad . May have to put him down, It may be too much trouble to make it worthwhile. Probably injured in shipment and looks pretty bad. It’s awful hard to treat a wounded wild mustang and sedation just ain’t possible for us. Cain’t be calling a vet out every day and my budget won’t allow it, just leave ol’baldy roan be Nate, he sure ain’t a horse for you. Let’s take a look at some more. Half of the boys have already grabbed a choice. You being at the bottom of the pecking order means you get last choice. Which one do you like?” Nate was still looking at the Roan and said, “ Bud ain’t there something we can do for the Roan? He looks awful lonesome and sad. I feel kinda sorry for him. He almost has a pleading look in his eyes.”

Bud replied, “ Nate you’re just soft hearted. Horses don’t have those kind of feelings, believe me they’re just wild animals. I like ‘em , respect them and always treat’em with kindness, but I don’t give them credit for too much intelligence. Almost everything they do is from instinct or copying another horse. They’re afraid of their own shadow and their first instinct is to bolt and run from anything that scares them. That is something you’ve learned already ,but you’ll get run over a few times, if you don’t keep that always in mind. These wild Mustangs especially are dangerous at both ends and life threatening in the middle. Just remember that you don’t need an injury or sick bay stay while you’re training a horse. As for the Roan, I’ll give him a few days and see what happens with that leg. You can kinda keep an eye on him if you like. We’re short a few head and I’d hate to lose him.” Nate excitedly said, “ Bud, could I have him for training if he’s OK? I think he would make a good horse.” Bud said, “ OK. Go to it if you like, but after culling the group and making assignments, it’s possible you may have to share a horse with another Inmate if we have to put him down.” Nate said, “ That’s OK Bud. If he has to go , I can at least give him a little company while he’s here.”

Bud was secretly pleased with Nate and his reaction to the Roan. He was thinking, “ Here’s a young man that shows compassion and love for an animal. He’ll be perfect for the Training program. The only other thing he needs to learn is patience and horse sense. With any kind of luck, a year from now he will be training other inmates.” Nate went back to the horse pen and began soft talking to the horse as he put together a little sweet feed on top of a flake of hay. He knew that this would get Ol’ Baltimore , as he now called him , to eating grain . there’s nothing like hunger to help with the gentling process. Baldy was nervous and scared. Nate moved away from the pen and continued his low monotone talking. Baldy , immediately began eating. That trip across country without feed or water had him head down eating right away. He had already hit the water trough. Nate kept talking and slowly a step at a time, he made his way to within ten feet, before Baldy threw his head up looking to run. Nate stopped and stood waiting for the horse to settle down, but Baldy scrambled to the other side of the pen. Nate turned and moved away. He was thinking, “Tomorrow, I’ll try again and hope that foot heals quickly. He’s a different horse than all the rest and I still think he’s lonely.”

Every day Nate made a long visit to Baldy’s pen. The horse began to soften to Nate’s voice and visits. Nate began to enjoy this, but far more so ; he was thrilled to see Baldy walking normal. Bud told him to keep up with the familiarity training and as soon as that foot was looking normal, to begin the stick training.

Nate had really been surprised when he worked with Jay learning the basics of stick training. Using a long stick or lightweight pole was used to touch the horse from a distance. The training pen was long and narrow with just enough width to provide safety for the trainer. It gave the horse the impression that you could keep a hand on him at all times and accelerated the gentling and human acceptance process. It only took a few sessions until the necessary trust for direct hand contact was made and this led to brushing and rigging training. Further down the road as Jay had shown him, came the normal saddling and training process. Bud relived Nate’s apprehension about

his training confidence when he said, “ Nate, don’t worry, Jay will be around to help you with the rough spots. Take it easy, you’re doing a great job. Ol’Baldy there, as you call him will be an exceptional animal. I like his low head carriage and quiet eyes. There’s few wrinkles around those eyes and it’s my experience that he will be a quiet and trustful horse. Just take it easy and give him plenty of time to learn and accept everything. Rushing and pushing him along will ruin him. He’ll learn to fight you and that resistance will only get worse.”

Four months later and Baldy(now formerly named Baltimore in Registration) was considered the best horse in the group among the last nine that came in Bud Mackin said, “ Nate I know you love this horse and you’ve done a masterful job of training him. He is lady broke if ever there was one. I can easily say he is one of the best I’ve ever turned out, and he’s as friendly as a kitten. Unfortunately, as you well know he’s ready for Auction. He’ll easily bring the three hundred that the Border Patrol pays. He may even bring more if a private buyer likes him. Nate I know how you feel. Ol’ Baltimore there probably loves you too. I’m sorry. Will you ride him through the ring and show him for the folks?”

Nate , with tears in his eyes said. “ Bud, I know what you’re sayin, but I just cain’t do it. To Ol’Baldy it’ll seem like I don’t want him any more. Let Jay do it, he’s ridden him some. I’ll ride the rest of’em. ‘ Bud said , “ Ok Nate, I know he’s your first horse and all. so Yeah, I’ll have Jay take him through. Remember though, some of the others take a little more handling and Nate, try not to get too attached to your next horse. You’ve done a great job and don’t forget ol’Baldy owes you his life. We were gonna put him down and because of you , he has a good life ahead.”

The Auction came up far too fast for Nate and it was breaking his heart to lose ol’Baldy. Finally though he realized he had to say good bye. There were a large group of buyers in the stand and Nate hoped that one of the pretty ladies there would buy him. No such luck! Ol’Baldy was too ugly and that Baltimore name didn’t help. Some folks thought he earned his name from balking more which even hurt his

sale to the Patrol. A balky horse is not a pleasure to ride for anyone . The patrol bought him for two hundred. Nate was then credited with having trained the lowest selling horse in the Auction. It was not something that Bud agreed with, but it had to go on Nate's record.

This was bad enough, but the Prison was cutting back on costs and wanted to reduce the scope of their training program. A number of the personnel in the training of wild horses would be reassigned to other work programs. Nate was high on the list for reassignment. Bud pleaded his case and insisted to management that Nate was a Class A horse trainer. He gave a list of those he felt were expendable, but it was no use. The bureaucrats felt they knew better and Nate was taken from the wild horse program he loved and put back in food management. Only on rare occasions was he able to work back in the horse training area.

Disappointment was something he was use to though and he told Bud on one occasion, “ Bud, I wanna thank you for what you did for me. This last year was more than I could ever hope for. I learned so much more than just training a horse. It was the finest thing I've ever done.” Bud said , “Nate there's never a guarantee for anything in Prison. You did a wonderful job on ol'Baldy and son you can do that same job in life. If you treat folks with the same attitude and understanding you used with that horse, you'll be a success story that I can sure be proud of. Let me know what happens to you. I'll try to keep in touch.”

This was the last time Nate saw Bud. Shortly after their talk, he was transferred to the Minimum Security Facility in Tucson Arizona. As Nate had no family to give him any financial support, he frequently went without toothpaste or soap for his showers. His size and background once again, saved him from the bullying tactics of other prisoners. He developed a friendship with Roy Barnes, a fellow inmate. Roy was an ex-amateur boxer, having become involved in drugs and gangs in Phoenix. He too had been involved in a shooting incident. They were on common ground, but Roy was serving ten years and still had four to go. Nate had only two.

During their many conversations, Nate learned that Roy's sister Jenny was providing him with prison spending money. Their folks had a small farm near the town of Show Low and Jenny worked as a waitress in Tucson. It was from her wages that Roy received prison money. Their Mom and Dad were both unable to drive so, twenty one year old Jenny was the man of the house. Roy spent a lot of time condemning the State and prison officials for everything. Nate's quiet nature kept himself and Roy out of trouble most of the time. Roy taught Nate a lot about boxing and it was soon apparent to Roy that Nate's reflexes were much better than average, He said, " Nate you'd make a good boxer. I know you said you've never fought, but I'll tell you , I wouldn't want to take you on. ' Nate replied, " No Roy, boxing is not for me. I like sparring with you but to try and hurt you; no I don't wanna do that."

Roy insisted on pushing Nate toward boxing until Nate was getting tired of it and said, " Roy Damnit, I don't wanna fight. I wanna train horses and when I get outta here that's what I'm gonna do. Beating someone's head off is not the way I wanna live." Roy was upset and said, ' You and you damn horses. You're as bad as my Dad. He's been catching and training wild mustangs for years and what's he got to show for it? Not a damn thing. I wouldn't be in here if he had taken a descent job so Jenny and I could have some of the good times other kids had."

" That's all I wanted Nate, just a little of the good times everyone else was having. Yeah, I was a very good Amateur Boxer, but I followed the money. What else was there? They don't bet on amateur fights right? In a pigs butt, friend! I wanted a piece of that action and yeah I took a dive in a couple of fights. The money was easy, the girls were there and the drugs got me in trouble. I needed money for my hits and joined a Gang to get it. I didn't know it would lead to a shooting and here I am. Ten damn years of this crap. All because my Dad was stuck on them damn horses. When you get outta here , I could put you in touch with a guy in boxing. With your ability , you could easily make a bundle. And you know something, I just mentioned you and what you

told me to Jen and she wants to meet you. Yeah, she's another dirt poor horse lover."

"I told her No, I didn't want her to get tangled up with some convict from Baltimore. You know what she said? " I'm already tangled up with a convict from Phoenix!" Nate said, " Roy I'd like to meet her, but the rules in this place won't let me see her on your visit. You know how it is . Give her my name and number, then she can call in for a visit."

Two weeks later Nate met Jenny Barnes and they exchanged lotta talk with out saying a lot, Nate said " Jenny your brother really has a problem with your folks messing with those wild horses. He seems to blame them for all of his trouble." Jenny replied, " Nate, don't repeat this to Roy and I'm maybe speaking outta turn, but first of all Roy is deathly afraid of horses and secondly he was Mom's first child. They spoiled him rotten. He always got his way about everything and really resented it when they couldn't get him a car. The one I drive is theirs. Dad has an old work truck, but he stays outta town. Roy wrecked the one I'm driving and it took me over a year to pay the damages at Dodge. Things have not been easy for us with him in Prison."

" He keeps asking for more money, but what can he spend it on in Jail. We're at our limit right now and Dad refuses to get a loan. Mom still treats him like her baby. Nate , I wanted to meet you because of what Roy has told me. Your story is a lot like his in some ways, but it looks like you've accepted things and moved on. I would love it if Roy did the same and I hope he learns something from you. His bitterness will cause him more trouble, I just know it. Nate I'm gonna call on you again if it's Ok. Just talking to you about Roy , helps me." Nate replied, " Jenny, thank you for the visit and I'll see what I can do for Roy. I really enjoy a visit from someone, I have no one to call on. Thank you again. Jenny replied, "See you in a couple of weeks."

Less than a week had passed since Jenny's visit to Roy and he was complaining about money again. This had become a regular thing.

Nate couldn't understand what he needed more money for and said " Roy what in the hell are you complaining about? You get almost a hundred bucks every two weeks and I don't get a dime. Sure I use your tooth paste and other stuff, but I catch up every month with that prison job." Roy exploded saying ' Damn You Nate! It's none of your damn business and quit carrying stories to Jenny. She shouldn't be coming down here to see you anyway. Just a waste of gas money. She can give me more than a miserable two hundred a month, I need twice that much!' Nate said no more. Something was going on and he began to suspect what it was, Nate himself had been a drug user. It was time for him to start keeping a close watch on Roy. He was buying drugs from someone.

Nate spent every minute he could with Roy to try and see an exchange. Roy began showing more and more the effects of heavy drug use. Nate tried to get Roy to talk about it, but all he got was a cursing. When he discovered where his drugs came from, it was too late. Roy had over dosed one evening after a visit from Jenny. Nate found him lying on the floor around midnight and couldn't wake him. Alerting the guards, Roy was taken to the sick bay and there the Medic on duty had him air lifted to the General Hospital in Phoenix .Prison Officials felt that his drugs were somehow smuggled in by his sister Jenny , although there was no contact between them and every minute of visit was recorded.

Nate could not let it be known that he knew the source was a Prison guard that was supplying a number of inmates. His name was Harris and every day, he made contact with a different one of his users where an exchange could be made. The stuff was then passed on to inmates on the payroll. If he put the finger on Harris , he knew he would be gang beaten, maybe killed. Prison Officials conducted an investigation, but nothing came of it. Nate figured there were other Guards involved, maybe some in the office. Jenny was barred from visiting Nate and it was two months before he learned that Roy had been in a coma for weeks; finally dying. Jenny had managed to get a phone call to him claiming to be his Cousin. Frequently after that she

was able to talk to him on the phone. Nate searched his brain trying to figure a way to expose Harris as the drug seller. Finally in desperation he said to Jenny, “ Cousin, some of the guards here are great, my cell mate Roy that died was really well liked by some. It was a terrible tragedy. Oh, I forgot I want you to write down this number 427747 it’s the combination answer to that question you keep asking.”

Jenny searched her brain for a reason that Nate gave her that number. Finally it dawned on her, “ Nate was giving her the name of Roy’s supplier, Those combination of numbers would spell the name of a guard. Trying every arrangement she finally hit on Harris and vaguely recalled Roy mentioning that name as a friend. She penned a letter to the prison Officials stating that, her brother, “ Roy had told her that a Guard named Harris was his best friend in Prison. Said, “ He keeps me happy.” I think that he was the source of Roy’s drugs.”

Nate told her by phone , a month later; that, “The Guard Harris is gone. Maybe transferred or something.” Jenny said, “ Thanks for that phone number Nate. I’m gonna try and get in to see you.” Nate said, “ Jenny , the big money involved makes that a real danger for you. Just gimme a call whenever you can. I love hearing from you and I’m coming up for parole. Keep your fingers crossed.” Jenny said, “ I’m going to give up this waitress job and go home to help Dad, but oh Nate! It would be wonderful if you could get a release early. When will you find out?” Nate replied, “ I hate to say it , but it’ll be three months or more. Things don’t move too fast in here and sometimes not at all. Jen I don’t have money for long distance calls , but I’ve your address and I’ll try to keep you informed.” As it turned out, this was his last communication with Jenny by phone and the numbers he had for her address were wrong.

Ol’Baldy had weathered the transport to Yuma Arizona and met his new master, Bud Jenkins Border Patrol Agent. Bud took to Baldy immediately. He was really surprised how well the horse was trained. He said to the Stable Manager, “” Some one put a lotta time and love into training this horse. I’ve never seen one come from that Colorado prison with this kind of capability. There’s nothing I can teach him.

Every time I try something new he already knows it. He's about the best Patrol horse I've ever seen and I've worked a hundred horses or more during my fifteen year career. I know I'll look forward to every Mission if I can ride ol'Baldy. He's absolutely a Lady Broke horse, if there ever was such a thing. I'll never understand how the Patrol was able to get him for two hundred. For looks, I'll agree with the price, but for performance he's easily worth ten times that. I've never been this lucky in the horse draw."

Two months later Bud had ridden Baldy too hard every day and he was showing the effects of abuse. Still he persisted in riding Baldy using spurs and a hand whip on occasion when he was in a hurry. On one of his patrols, he spotted smugglers going over the barbed wire fence and headed for the river. On this occasion he was credited with the capture of the smugglers out of Phoenix with an estimated three thousand dollar packet of Heroin. He was given an award and promotion for the effort, but never mentioned to anyone that he had spurred and stampeded Ol'Baldy into breaking through the Border Barbed wire fencing to catch the smugglers. The horse had been treated horribly by Bud in his attempt to make a name for himself.

On the night of Bud's award and promotion ceremony Ol'Baldy stood in a corral with both legs and chest still covered with crusted blood. Kerosene had been overly used to treat his wounds and the excess had burned him all the way down including his fetlocks. This burning misery would last for two or three days. Bud had not called a vet and treated Baldy himself. Neglected his wounds got worse and a vet was called in. Baldy was laid up for two months healing the deep wire cuts. Bud was really upset with the Patrol veterinarian, because with Baldy in layup he was assigned another horse. Following layup Baldy was used for visiting inspectors and government agents. Very few recognized his value and he was often left unattended. His appearance suffered from grooming neglect and the terrible scaring he had suffered from the barbed wire. He was relegated to the lower class user mount cavy, which spent most of their time in corral and only used for visitors or spare mounts when a mission was called for.

Bud Jenkins had been transferred to the Del Rio Station in Texas. There was no one in the Yuma Station that had any idea of Baldy's training and ability to support the Border Patrol's Mission. The wire cuts he'd suffered caused a disfiguring loss of hair across his chest and were a long time healing over. Visiting dignitaries wanted a better looking horse than Baldy. He was not used much but became a favorite for the Livery personnel. His attitude made him loved by all.

During his stay in Yuma, he became part of a ruse petrol actually set up to satisfy investigations generated in Washington DC . Agent Carl Simmons was a member of the Border Patrol agency office in Washington. Being related to a congressman and having served as an intern, he was easily chosen for an agency position. Raw and never having ridden a horse before, he was never the less sent as part of an inspection team to analyze the overall operation of the Yuma Mounted Petrol Division. This assignment was a paperwork exercise to determine if a reduction in agents could be made as cost savings was the order of the day. Simmons was not suited for the job, but perk type treatment was necessary to satisfy him and his trip to Yuma. Chief Daly of the Agency decided to send him out with a Petrol to give him something to report on. Baldy still in rough condition was selected for Simmons. No one realized that this selection would result in saving the agency a major reduction in personnel.

Simmons was horrified when looking at the condition of Baldy's chest. Knowing nothing of horses he assumed that he was being neglected because of lack of funding for veterinarian support. He refused to believe Chief Daly that there was nothing to worry about. Baldy was in fine condition as is. The agency only called on vet support when a serious condition made it necessary. Vets were costly. Simmons was appalled that Daly didn't consider Baldy's condition serious.

Simmons , now put a critical eye on everything. Baldy's rigging was of course, not in the best of condition. Seldom used, he was rigged with the well worn hand me downs from other horses. Everything was clean , but showing cracks in the leather and worn

edges in every blanket. Simmon's was not sure of his safety riding in this poor equipment and on a sick horse. He was a little less concerned when he saw that most of the Petrol were also riding in well worn saddles. In his opinion they were in far worse condition than he was accustomed to seeing on the mounted police in Washington. His report would reflect the need for increased funding to replace this aged unsafe equipment.

The Inspection Petrol organized by Chief Daly was just an exercise to give Agent Simmons a small sample of the Petrols responsibility in preventing illegals from crossing the Border. Fences east of Yuma were nonexistent or down for miles. Simmons was shocked, thinking the fences were the responsibility of the Border Patrol. It was obvious to him, that major work and funding for the Yuma station was essential immediately.

Simmons recommended that Baldy should be retired from service. It didn't appear to him that his chest was healing. He had no knowledge that the thick salve daily put on his chest was common Vaseline to serve as a wet bandage to prevent infection from flies and aid in healing. The livery manager was pleased with Baldy's progress and paid little attention to the opinion of a wet behind the ears kid from Washington. This attitude increased Simmon's opinion that the horse was neglected veterinarian care, due to tight funding.

Captain Daly felt that Simmon's report was very favorable with exception of his recommendation to retire Baldy. He did feel that Baldy was a disfigurement at his Station because of his looks and for this reason, he was transferred to a smaller outpost near the Border and very sparingly used for Patrol work. Most agents now treated him like a cheap Livery stable horse and as such, he was often left wet and standing in the hot desert sun. No Agent wanted him as an assigned mount where he could receive dedicated attention. Though still a young six year old horse, he looked like a discarded twelve. No Agent wanted an old horse. Captain Daly had not realized the effect Baldy had on Simmon's was the reason his station received such a

favorable report. Yuma station was recommended for an increase in funding , not a reduction.

The Station in Sierra Vista needed horses and Baldy was transferred there. Bart Reynolds was the livery Manager and immediately complained that Yuma and Tucson stations were sending him their discards . He had asked for young stock and here he was getting horses old enough to vote. He was told by the Station Manager to send his discards to the holding yard in Wilcox. The Border Patrol Station there could stable them until Auction date. Ol'Baldy was the first one selected to go, but he was a good quiet hauler. After all he'd spent a good three thousand miles in horse vans. Unfortunately, The Auction he was going to was primarily for killer horses . Though not legal in the US, Mexico had a number of slaughter facilities and most horses going cheap were grabbed up for resale in Mexico.

The Auction date arrived and it wasn't looking too good for Ol'Baldy. A number of killer buyers were on hand to get a truck load and Baldy being a fairly large horse would bring a good price in Mexico. Most counties other than the US considered horse meat acceptable for eating; some even considered it a delicacy. There was always a good market available. A dozen buyers were eying Baldy and the auctioneer saw him as an outstanding sale horse considering the meat market. The BLM freeze brand on his neck prevented any livery or pleasure buyers from considering him. He was obviously a wild Mustang, probably unbroken and possessing any number of bad habits from being spoil raised in someone's back yard. A large number of adopted wild horses wound up this way and eventually were put down as worthless animals.

When one buyer mentioned the freeze brand to Ceas Metter , the Auctioneer, he cursed saying, " Damn!, how did he get in this sale. I can't sell that BLM horse in this killer Market. Hell, I'd lose my license. Pull that tag off and get that worthless skate outta here. Tell the owners he has to go to the Globe Auction for selling. That's a Government run outfit that holds them for Adoption. Six months and no takers. He's horsemeat! That's the law. I don't need any more

trouble from some politician's over paid nephew as a sale inspector. Run him outta here!"

Once again Ol'Baldy was on the road. This time he went to a BLM adoption center for Wild mustangs, captured for removal from over grazed Arizona ranges. The same ranges that cattleman paid the government for grazing rights. Cattle money made the difference and the Mustang had to go. Baldy, neglected of grooming, trimming and shoeing for four months , now looked no different than the hundred and twenty wild mustangs held in the Adoption corrals. He , like all of the horses carried a freeze brand on their necks, but with the brand so similar, he was lost among the others.

Jake Tibbets was the Center Manager and hated the smell of horses. He should never have been a manager of anything, but politics in the bureaucracy had awarded him the job. Jake was as underhanded as those that gave him the assignment. It was only natural that he would try to exploit his position for personal gain. Knowing that a large number of the horses would never find adoption, he worked with some of the Wranglers to insure that the older heavier horses ran out their six months holding and disappeared south of the Border. The Wranglers would discourage adopting folks from taking older larger horses as too hard to train and list them as euthanized, a nice way of saying murdered. In reality, loaded on trucks at night and driven south to the Slaughter houses. Tibbets would pocket an easy two thousand for twenty four killers.

Six long months had gone by and Ol'Baldy had tried his best to make friends with the Wranglers, but most took his action as attacking them and drove him away with whips or ropes. It took very little of this kind of treatment to make Baldy wary of getting close. He was quickly returning to the wild Mustang ways and attitude. He was selected as a prime member of the group to be loaded out for the Slaughter houses.

A new group of mustangs were due in and Tibbets had to make room for them. He called his Mexican contacts and brought the truck in after dark. He had purposely had a dirt road cut in from the

interstate highway to enable his crooked operation. Unbeknown to him and his wranglers, a highway crew had repaired the embankment where he had cut it to make his road. The truck driver coming in after dark had to make three attempts before he could get over the new berm cursing the Highway folks for piling up dirt in his roadway. Finally getting underway he drove to the corrals and the Wranglers were waiting to load him up. Twenty four head they loaded. Ol'Baldy was the first aboard. He was accustomed to loading and served as a Judas lead for the other horses.

Here again Ol'Baldy is threatened with being killed. Once in Mexico it would be all over for him. It seemed his whole life was just one mishap after another. Maybe this was it. The end of the trail. Once again though a mishap occurred when the truck driver attempted to get back on the interstate. The weight of twenty four horses on board high centered his trailer van on the high berm. The Mexican driver panicked. It was a good four miles back to the corrals for help and if he was caught hauling stolen horses, by the Highway Police, everything he owned would be lost and he would go to Jail! His only choice was , 'Get rid of the horses !' dropping the tail gates , he spooked the wild horses out of his truck. Ol'Baldy joined the free mustangs. The truck driver with an empty van , should have easily crossed the berm, but he had cut such deep holes with his wheels. He was stuck. There was nothing he could do and the Highway Police found him that way.

Daybreak found some of the Mustangs back at the Corrals waiting to be fed as normal . Baldy and half a dozen mares were seen drifting north out into the desert. Mares seem to have a homing instinct and Baldy was following this group. By nine o'clock a Patrol helicopter had spotted the group and Wranglers were sent out to capture them. Dave Pickins was one of these Wranglers and not a member of the thieves. He had long experience with wild horses and had been called in to help. He said to Tippetts capture instructions, "Good luck with that Tippetts, these are wild animals. You can drive them almost anywhere but you better have a big corral to catch them

in. These wranglers haven't got a prayer of catching even one. I recommend leave them go. They'll just join another group of wild ones and maybe get caught again. Believe me it'll save a lot of time and money if you just forget'em."

Tippets exploded with, " Damnit, I can't let'em go! They'll cost me my job!" Pickins replied, " Tippets if what I heard from your Wranglers is true, you deserve to lose and be booted outta BLM service. From what they say , your truck driver spilled the beans. " Tippet's exclaimed , " The hell with you! I don't need you ,go home." Dave waved "Good bye" as he left. Tibbets sent the other Wranglers after the mustangs. Pickens was right, There was no catch pen anywhere for a drive and the mustangs all raced north leaving the Wranglers far behind. Baldy went with them. Now free once again three weeks later Baldy and the mares were out in the foothills and deserts near Globe. Baldy wandered along feeding with them. On a few occasions the dreaded birds from the sky came to push them, but they were a small group and not worth the gas to try and corral. As winter came on they wandered closer to the Range pastures near town and it was in December , half starved and fighting freezing temperatures, that they were seen and carefully moved into a catch pen with hay put out for them to eat. Wild and hard to manage, the ranch owner hauled them in to Auction, rather than see them starve. Someone might want them other than killer buyers.

Back in the Tucson Prison, Nate was often wondering how his Ol'Baldy was doing and praying that someday he could get back to training horses again. That had been the happiest moments of his life and he was willing to do anything to do it all again, but, not in Prison! His three month wait was almost over and he hoped and prayed that the board would release him into probation. What would he do when he got out? He had no idea, but the one thing he wanted most was to see Jenny again. Thinking of her and how to locate her had been on his mind almost every day. He knew that she had worked at a restaurant in Tucson, but there were hundreds of those. Not much help there. "Well," he was thinking, "her Folks lived in Show Low and her last

name was Barnes. That should be enough to find her. He couldn't wait to get out. The days just seemed to drag by." He desperately wished she would call him, but he knew she wouldn't because of that dope Ring threat. But worst of all, here she is waiting for a letter and I have the wrong address. Every letter was returned" These were the thoughts that were driving him batty when his day for parole review came up.

Other inmates had given him pointers on what to say for answers, but Nate figured, ' These guys are still in here. I'll just answer truthfully what I plan and believe I can do. Stock answers will just get me a head nod and I need follow up questioning from the Review board to know they're really interested.'

For Nate , it couldn't have gone better. He told them that he realized a job might be hard to find, but that he had taken every opportunity while in Prison to learn every skill possible. If diggin ditches was offered , he'd take it until he could do better. He was good at throwing hay bales, operating farm equipment and loved working with horses. This was his goal. The Review Board was impressed with all of his answers and with very little deliberation, Nate was Paroled !

One bad feature he learned the following day during his release briefing. He was not permitted to leave Tucson without consent of his Parole Officer. This was not good news, but he had no place to stay anyway. Finding Jenny would just have to wait. He had some small savings in his prison account, but it would be gone in a week. He went to visit the local Salvation Army Store and agreed to work for them separating and stocking shelves in exchange for clothes. He picked up a few yard clean up jobs from some of the customers, but the homeless shelter was all he could find to live in . He went looking through the various Restaurants for anyone that might know Jenny. With no luck there, he did get a job washing dishes and now he could get a room to stay in The dish washing job developed into handy man help for the restaurant owner and part time cook. Things were looking better, but he still needed to find Jenny. The Restaurant owner

suggested that he might just write a letter to the Barnes Family and post it for General Delivery, Show Low Az. The lady at the Post Office was very skeptical that this would ever get it to the Barnes.

Nate, dwelling on what Jenny had told him about her Dad , Thought that once in Show Low, he could search local feed stores to find the location of Barnes ranch. He enquired of his parole officer for permission to go to Show Low and was told , “ No, If you had a job there or a family to sponsor you , I would consider it , but for now you will remain on probation here in Tucson. Don’t leave town or you’ll be right back in a cell.” Nate assured him that he wouldn’t leave, he’d just have to try that General Delivery and hope it worked.

Some days later Nate was thinking about sending a letter but a walk to the post office wasn’t something he looked forward to . It was two miles away . He needed to get a bicycle to get around on at least until he could afford a car. It was this thought that brought his memory back to Jenny. She had said it took her a year to pay off Dodge for repairing her car. “Bingo!” he was thinking. The Dodge dealer in Tucson. That had to be the place, would they give him Jenny’s address? How could he convince them to give it to him. He would try a little lying with his own paycheck.

No was the only answer he got, ‘ We can’t give customer information without their consent” Nate pleaded with them saying that he had to get the check to her so she could bring her car in for more repairs. The shop manager said, “ Why don’t you just take it to her. I think she works for Tom’s Diner on First Avenue. At least that’s where she was working when we picked up her car.’ Nate gave his thanks and that evening before closing he made it to Tom’s. Alice, one of the waitresses over heard him asking for Jenny saying he had a check for her, but didn’t have her mailing address. She said, “Mister, I don’t have her mailing address but here’s her phone number. I know she can use the money. She’ll tell you where to send it.” A very pleased Nate made a phone call that evening and the squealing of Jenny’s pleasure over the phone was all he needed to put him on cloud nine.

The next week was a series of phone call instructions on how to get to the Barnes Ranch in Show Low. He reminded her that he couldn't leave Tucson until he had Parole permission. Jenny made plans to come and see him in Tucson. This didn't set well with her Mom and Dad, but she was coming anyway. Her Dad Jim Barnes said, "Jen, I know you want to see this guy, but you really don't know him at all and you know I need your help with those three mustangs. I know you gave up your job in Tucson after Roy died to help me and I can't thank you enough for that. Roy's death has almost killed your Mom. She's not been the same since."

"This Nate you speak of is a criminal too and how do you know he won't turn out just like Roy." Jen replied, "Dad, I don't know any more than you, but I have feelings that I trust and I trust what I feel about Nate. I've never had the opportunity to do a lot of dating and I don't know a lot. I do know that I'm willing to take a chance on Nate. He has nothing, but is taking any work that's offered to get on his feet. He would love to come here and help with your horses. He wants to spend his life training them. Daddy, maybe that's why I think so much of him. He's like you." Jim had no answer but said, "Jenny, your Mom and I want what's best for you. We don't know this man, but we don't hardly know anyone around Show Low either. I guess we are too concerned for you. We'll step back and let you make your own decisions, but Darling we'll be there if you ever need us. Yes. you go ahead and see this feller Nate. Invite him to come when he can. I and your Mom would love to meet him"

The next evening Nate and Jenny had dinner together at Tom's Diner. Nate had hugged her so tight when they met that Jen had to plead with him to be easy. She couldn't breathe. Their whole evening was spent sharing with each other and later Nate said, "Jen, I love you girl and I think you know that I'd never do anything to hurt you. I know money's kinda tight but I do have a couch in my room. You can have the bed and sack out there tonight." Jen laughed saying "Nate you're a perfect gentleman and I fell in love with you when we first

met. I don't have to worry about you. Mom and Dad want to meet you. When can you get away to visit us?"

Nate replied, " Jen , I'm way ahead of you. If I can find a job or a family to sponsor me in Show Low, my Parole officer will transfer me to another officer in that area. He's gonna give me a month to get something in the line of work. They've been really good to me here in Tucson and I hate to leave my job at the Restaurant, but George , the Owner said he'd write me up a good reference.' Jen exclaimed , " Oh God Nate! Can you do that? Roy always said the Officials here were all meaner than hell. He claimed they wouldn't help him in any way at all." Nate said, " Jen , your brother was a very bitter man that treated the Guards like dirt. No, I'd agree, he never got a lotta help from them, but he made most of his own troubles. Sometimes he resented me because I was treated well by everyone. No Jen , lets talk about something else. How's your Dad doing with the Mustangs?"

Two days Jen stayed with Nate and it was a sad parting when she left. Nate insisted on buying her gas and asked if she could come to Globe and pick him up at the Greyhound station when he could arrange to come to their Ranch. Jen couldn't wait for that day to happen. She was in tears as they kissed Good bye. He would phone her that evening.

Weeks later, he met the Barns family. Jim was impressed with Nate , but Jen's Mom peppered him with questions about Roy and how he was mistreated in Prison. Jim apologized to him later and Nate said, " Mister Barns, I understand the thin edge of truth I have to walk with regard to your wife's love for her son. I'll never say or do anything that will hurt her.' Jim said, " Son, I like you better all the time. You're very understanding. Nate said, " When I was in the wild horse program in Colorado, I learned tolerance, patience, understanding and love for horses. I've applied those same things in dealing with people. It works."

Jim said, ' I understand you have a job at the big Feed and Livestock Barn in town. I have a lotta dealings with those folks. Nate

replied, “ Yeah it’s only part time and don’t pay a lot. I was wondering if I might could work for you some on these mustangs Jen says you make a living catching and training them. I worked with some in Colorado. Had great luck with a pretty good sized one I called Baldy. His stock name was Baltimore. Took him from a raw bronc to almost lady broke in four months. Jim exclaimed, “” No way! Four months? God man it takes me six months and more to get a quiet horse. How would you ever train a wild horse in four months to be safe? What kinda magic did you use?”

Nate replied, “ Jim , I could show you how , but let me see your corrals first.” Jim was amazed and very skeptical of this crazy way to train horses, but Nate convinced him to give it a try. They built four long training pens and got wooden poles to do the stick training. Jim had six mustangs he had caught and they put four in training . Jim couldn’t believe the progress they made in one month. He said, “ Nate , I’ve been in this business my whole life and never saw horses trained like that. I could sell two of those tomorrow; they’re so tame. Son you’ve really opened my eyes. Nate said, “ Jim, I love working with horses but I’ve gotta make a little more money . That part time job just don’t pay enough I won’t be able to help you for awhile, but Jen has been out here every day and she’s better than either of us. Horses just seem to love her. Use this same routine with every horse and they’ll all come along just fine. Some take a little extra, but keep at it . I’m taking on a second job at the Jenkins Auction Yard on Tuesday and Thursday nights so on those days I can’t get out here to really do anything.’ Jim replied, “ Nate you’re a God Sent present for our family. You’ve made it possible for me to look at doubling my income and Mom thinks you’re wonderful. Jen has probably already made plans for you. I’m sure you know that. I understand you want to get ahead and we’re all for you. Yeah that Jenkins auction is great for me . I get most of my Mustangs from there. Some of these wild horse hunters around here are always bringing their catches in for sale; most of them go for killers if I don’t like’em. It hurts me sometimes to sit on my hands when I have to pass up a good prospect, but I can only do so much with my feed bill. Nate you might give me a call if anyone brings in a

few wild ones. We've got two open pens and I've got two more horses already spoke for."

A month had gone by and Nate was loving his new job. His experience with horses made him Top Hand at the sale yard. Jenkins loved his work and it looked like Nate was gonna be working all of the big Auctions in Globe where Jenkins did the auctioneering. His parole officer was well pleased with the progress Nate was making. He gave up his part time Barn job and had more time for Jenny and her Dad. They were making plans for marriage. No one was surprised.

It was early December when Russ Jones consigned seven wild horses for the Auction. They had shone up near his corrals. Range grass was very scarce anywhere and all seven horses were in very poor condition. It was common for sheep herds to graze the open ranges around Show Low and very little grass remained. Hunger and Russ's horse's had lured this bunch in and Russ corralled them where they could get feed for a few days. He couldn't afford to keep them and hauled them in for sale. Nate called Jim. This looked like a good opportunity to buy a bunch for killer prices. Jim had open pens and this bunch looked pretty good except for poor condition.

When Jim and Jenny arrived, they went to check over the wild ones. He said , " Yeah Nate I can take the six mares if they go for killer prices. That old stallion though, looks like he got tangled in a barbed wire fence at some time . Probably really messed up his legs and look at that mess on his chest. Sure couldn't get much of a price for him. The killers will probably haul him off if he's free. They do that when one won't sell." Nate said, "Jim , I guess I'm too soft hearted for this business. That old bald faced horse sure reminds me of Ol'Baldy I told you about. He almost looks like he's pleading with me. Jim, he's not a wild horse! Hell he's been gelded! We all thought he was a stallion with these six mares. Something ain't right here. Lets get him in a holding chute, I wanna take a close look at him.'

Minutes later he said, "Jim , he's a BLM horse, his long mane covered his tattoo look here. I'll bet all of these are BLM horses. I'll tell

Jenkins. We can't sell them tonight. Gotta check with BLM in Globe and get an Ok. Looks like they'll get a few good meals outta this anyway." Jim said, " Nate what about the gelding? I'll go ahead and bid the others. If BLM says sell I can get'em for killer price and considering their condition they'll run sixty a piece." Nate said, " Jim I know it's dumb of me , but I'll pay for Ol'Baldy here and his keep. I couldn't sleep nights thinking about those big old soft pleading eyes." Jen laughing said, " Oh Nate you're a real push over for soft eyes, but I love you anyway. Just remember after we're married you can't bring home every down and out horse you see, pleading eyes or not." Nate laughed and said, " Yeah I'm a real soft touch for the soft brown eyes of the girl I'm gonna marry." Jim said, " Ok , you two, cut the love bug stuff and lets go see Jenkins."

The next day Nate called Jim and said, ' Reckon they're all yours Jim. BLM says they sound like some that escaped from them back in the spring. They want me to record the alpha symbol Tattoo on each horses neck so they can keep their records straight. Ask Jen if she can come in here when you pick 'em up . You told me she worked some with a veterinarian and read those things for him.'" When Jen came in the office , she asked for a horse clipper and said, " Can't hardly read the brand if you don't cut off the long hair. I brought my book along just in case I can't remember something. Here is how you do it It's actually pretty easy . Every mark is an Alpha symbol.

The large U shaped mark is the BLM code. The next two marks (one on top of the other) is the estimated year of the horses birth. The next six marks is the registration code. The registration code is made up of two digits identifying the region taken and the next four are the "tag number." Nate replied," No, maybe for you , but remember, I never made it through school." Jen laughed saying," My dear Mister Rogers one of these days maybe I'll put a brand on you. Look here at these symbols The big U shape for BLM and the following symbols read 81 birth date 03 for State location and the other symbols make up his tag number1983. Pretty easy Huh?"Nate just shook his head saying, " Jen Honey, it's all Greek to me" Jen replied laughing, "Nate you Darling, all Alpha symbols are Greek!" Poor Nate just shook his head and said ,

“Ok Jen we’ll run ‘em in that medicine chute and clip the hair off. You call out the numbers and at least I have schooling enough to write’em down.” Later after recording everything, Jen said, “Ok here’s the readings. All of the mares com from Arizona, two are four year olds and the other four read three. The old gelding comes from Nevada and he’s only seven . I would have guessed twelve or better, but the Alpha symbols say seven. Each horse has a different ID number and can be tracked back to the freeze branding and the agency that did it. Nate it looks like you have an adult horse. Whether you can train him or not I don’t know.”

Nate said, “ Jen he’s already trained . I rode him around the pen today. He’s plenty gentle . Yeah, I’ve got a good horse and just as soon as I can get groceries in him he’ll be a great ride. He sure don’t need any training. It’s almost spooky; he’s a dead ringer for Ol’Baldy, the horse I trained in Colorado Prison and he is friendly as a kitten. As soon as I can , I’m gonna see what his background is. I’ll bet someone at Globe BLM can do a back check on his number.’ Jen said, ‘ Oh Nate! Is it possible that he could be the same horse?” Nate said, “ No that would be a God sent miracle, I’m sure he’s just a horse similar in looks to the Ol’Baldy I trained. I won’t knock him for that, he’s gonna be treated just like I wish I could have done for Old Baltimore.

The End