



Wildwood Farm CLIPS & CLOPS Oak Harbor

FEBRUARY 2026

YOUR NEIGH-BORHOOD HULLABALOO

CREATED & EDITED BY HEATHER CARDER

ANGEL'S BREATH

By JoDean Nicolette

Angel's hooves stay planted, but I feel the question in his back, the offer to spin and gallop. I hold firm in my seat, knees forward, signaling to my horse that we should not move. He trusts me and squares his stance.

Ahead of me, framed by Angel's ears, I see a bear crossing the path a few dozen feet away. The bear is fast as it lumbers, chuffing, footfalls impossibly silent, its cinnamon bulk parting the fescue and buffalo grass. Here in Montana's Bitterroot Mountains the scattered human population shares space with some formidable wild inhabitants.

When the dirt track is once more unobstructed, my horse and I exhale together. I lift my weight in the saddle, think, Forward, and we resume our ride through bottlebrush and sage

Halfway up the Coyote Coulee's last climb, I feel the power in Angel's haunches start to wane, and his breath comes too audibly for a quarter horse. He drops his head and digs in, determined to carry us to the top. My

heart aches at his effort, his desire to please even as he struggles. I can't stand it. I tense my belly, whisper, "Whoa," and hop off to walk beside him. The incline on this section of trail is gradual, but after a dozen steps I am puffing, too. My bronchi burn, and I force air out. I pat my pockets for the albuterol inhaler, then recall my morning rush: splash of a shower, coffee to go, bite of Angel's apple for breakfast. No time to grab the inhaler or the allergy pill. As a doctor, I should have known better — but then, doctors make the worst patients.

My shoulder brushes Angel's as we expand our chests to breathe. I reach under his blond mane and scratch. He huffs. I want him to rest, but he charges ahead, eager to reach the top and the last gentle meander to my truck and his trailer.

"It's his wind," I said to the California veterinarian three summers ago, when this problem began. "He gets short of breath on hills."

He paused, rubbed his weathered jaw, then listened to Angel's chest, the stethoscope bell held between two calloused fingers. Angel stood silent and still, as if he knew what to do.

"Old boy is twenty-one now, isn't he?" the vet asked, pulling out the earpieces and scanning my horse mane to tail. He ran his hand along Angel's spine. "He's got good muscle tone. Looks good."

I beamed. "He still works. We ride in the parks: Anna-del, Sugarloaf, Sonoma Mountain. He's so eager to go. He just has trouble with hills." I put my nose to Angel's muzzle, and he nudged me back, smearing grass on my face.

"How long you had him? Nigh on fifteen years?" The vet stepped to his truck's tailgate. "You two had a good run of it."

The hair on my neck rose. I knew what he was going to say. He tapped a Marlboro out of its pack, flicked a lighter. "Ever considered easing him into retirement?"

"It doesn't feel like his time yet," I said as the vet packed up his truck. I wasn't sure whether I felt this way because I knew Angel better than the vet did or because I couldn't stand the thought of his mortality. He would never be *that* horse to me, solitary and swaybacked in the pasture, watching
Continued on page 11

WHAT'S TRENDING NOW

Horse-Shaped Toilets

By Versace

Are you tired of the same old boring bathroom decor? Looking to add a touch of whimsy and personality to your space? Look no further than a horse-shaped toilet! This unique and eye-catching fixture is sure to be a conversation starter and bring a sense of fun and style to any bathroom. Whether you're a horse lover or simply appreciate unique and creative design, a horse-shaped toilet can be the perfect addition to your home.

Believe it or not, the horse-shaped toilet has been around for centuries. The earliest recorded example dates back to ancient Rome, where wealthy citizens would have their bathrooms adorned with elaborate horse-shaped fixtures. These were seen as a symbol of wealth and status and were often made from expensive materials such as marble and gold.

In European castles and palaces during the Middle Ages, horse-shaped toilets were also used as a status symbol. They were typically located in private chambers and only used by royalty or other high-ranking individuals. These early versions were often intricately carved and served more as decorative pieces than functional fixtures.



In the 19th century, with the rise of the Industrial Revolution and the emergence of the middle class, horse-shaped toilets became more accessible to the general public. They were still considered a luxury item but were now being mass-produced and affordable to those outside of the upper class.

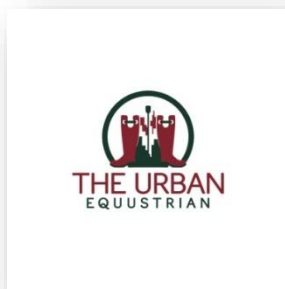
If you're worried about the horse-shaped toilet overpowering your bathroom, opt for a simpler design. There are many options available, from minimalist horse-shaped toilets to ones with more intricate details. Choosing a more understated design will allow it to blend seamlessly with the rest of your bathroom decor.

- Unique and eye-catching design
- Adds personality and charm to your bathroom
- Can serve as a focal point or complement other equestrian-themed decor

www.versace.com

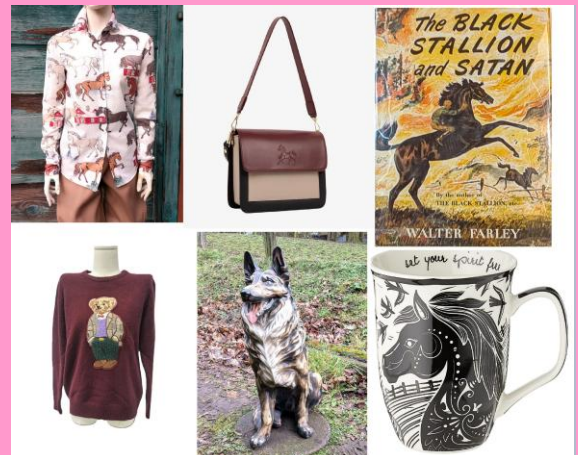


Our Store is currently open by Appointment.



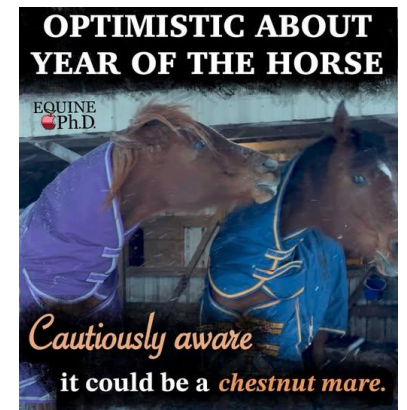
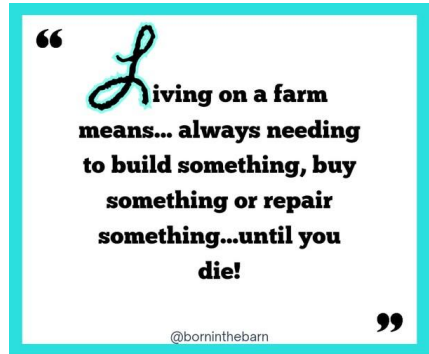
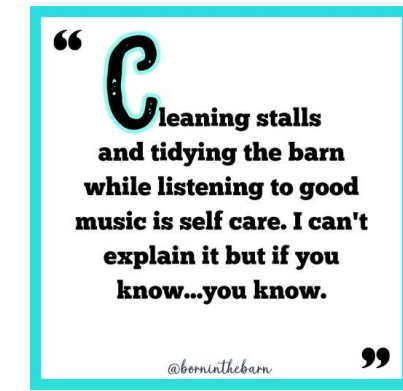
Shop Online!
www.thenoblehorsevintage.etsy.com

New Items for February





'I'll have two extra large hay squares, a side of lucerne with pellets on top, ten carrots and a dozen apples to go'



MY MOTHER ALWAYS SAID "WORK UNTIL YOUR BANK ACCOUNT LOOKS LIKE A PHONE NUMBER"

"MOM I MADE IT"

AVAILABLE BALANCE \$9.11

#RODEOLIFE



WILDWOOD FARM B&B



This is your moment.

Today at Wildwood Farm B&B

An Epidemiologist realized...

Dreams need footsteps, not wishful thinking.

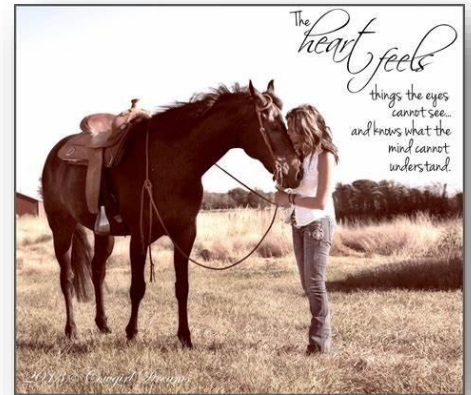
Immerse yourself in the equestrian world at Wildwood Farm B&B located on beautiful Whidbey Island.

Our ranch has a long history of igniting the spark between horses and humans, whether you want a small introduction or total immersion.

Come experience the power of possibility with these magnificent creatures and explore the abundance of silent repose.

www.wildwoodfarmbandb.com

WILDWOOD FARM HAS IT ALL!



WWW.PNWRiding.com

PACIFIC NORTHWEST RIDING ACADEMY



Equine Disease Communication Center
 4033 Iron Works Parkway
 Lexington, Kentucky 40511
 Phone: 859-233-3322
 Email: edcc@aaep.org

January 5, 2026

Summary for 12/01/2025 - 12/31/2025

38 alerts posted reporting on 42 confirmed cases

Ordered by State:

Disease	State	Confirmed
Equine Herpesvirus- Neurologic	Florida	2
	Maryland	1
	Minnesota	1
	Oklahoma	1
	Texas	11
Equine Herpesvirus- Respiratory	Kentucky	1
	Tennessee	1
Equine Infectious Anemia	Colorado	1
Equine Influenza	Indiana	2
Strangles	British Columbia	1
	California	1
	Florida	1
	Michigan	1
	Ontario	15
	Washington	1
	Wisconsin	1

For the current status on Vesicular Stomatitis, please see:
<https://www.aphis.usda.gov/livestock-poultry-disease/cattle/vesicular-stomatitis>

Nutrition Corner

Three Things to Toss From Your Feed Room

The feed room is an important part of any barn, and it can quickly become a cluttered and unsanitary space if not regularly maintained. Keeping it clean and organized helps protect your feed from contamination, promotes horse health, and ensures smoother daily operations. Here are three things to clean out of your feed room this season.

1. Expired Horse Supplements and Medications

Over time, unused or partially used equine supplements and medications can accumulate, and their expiration dates might slip past unnoticed. Expired products not only lose potency but can also be harmful to your horse.

2. Spilled Horse Feed and Damaged Bags

Spilled feed creates waste and attracts rodents, which can carry diseases that affect both humans and horses. It also invites insects and causes a mess. Check corners of the room, under storage bins, and around unopened feed bags for any spilled grain or remnants. Inspect your feed

bags for holes or damage, because compromised packaging can lead to spoilage or contamination. Invest in sturdy, secure storage containers for grain, pellets, and other feed to protect them from pests and moisture.

3. Dust and Cobwebs in the Feed Room

Dust and cobwebs might not stand out like spilled feed, but they still contribute to an untidy environment. Cobwebs can also accumulate dust or trap debris, becoming a fire hazard. Take the time to sweep down cobwebs, dust shelves and surfaces, and sweep the floor to maintain a tidy space. Regular cleaning also helps you catch other potential issues, such as water leaks or mold, before they become bigger problems.

Take-Home Message

By addressing these basic problems on a regular basis, you can ensure your feed room stays clean, safe, and organized throughout the year, saving you time and simplifying daily barn tasks. A little effort now can go a long way in supporting your horse's health and well-being.

WILDWOOD FARM AND TRIPLE CROWN FEEDS.

Our partnership with Triple Crown began in 2014 through a promotion with the USEF encouraging farm members to compare their current feeding programs with Triple Crown products. We have found the TC products to be superior to other products primarily because of the EquiMix technology and the research support of a leading-edge team including independent representatives of Equine Universities, Medical clinics and top-level riders and trainers

Down Memory Lane at Wildwood Farm MEET CELIA

In March of 2005 we were attending the Enumclaw auction more for entertainment than actual buying; there is something about just looking at horses that are for sale that is incredibly satisfying.

This particular Sunday there were about 40 horses going through and during our pre-auction walk through the paddocks we saw some nice horses and ponies – a lovely little Welsh gelding and a handsome Clydesdale caught our eye for our lesson program – but we did not see a little mini donkey that was hiding behind a thoroughbred in a packed paddock, terrified and trembling; she was very young.

As the auction commenced, we took our seats and for the next hour we were totally immersed in the animals going through, and the bidders, and the buyers, and the auctioneer – so much fun on a Sunday afternoon.

As the auction was dwindling down, we suddenly heard the loudest, most ear-piercing bray that made all of us jump and caused quite a commotion in the stock yard. Sure that the animal making the sound had to be huge and formidable, none of us expected what entered the arena once the door swung open.

It was Celia. And she was TINY. She was a mini donkey. Cute as a button with huge ears, tiny hooves, tiny body and one BIG voice!

When she entered the sales pen, she was not happy to be taken



away from her friends and made that very clear. We could hardly hear the auctioneer over her loud brays. No one was bidding on her and in desperation the auctioneer said, "who will give me \$50 for this donkey?"

Somehow my hand shot up and before I knew it, we purchased a little, albeit angry, mini donkey named Celia. Of course, we had not planned on purchasing anything and did not bring our trailer. The office staff pointed me to a person who lived in Mt Vernon who might have room, and when I caught up to her, I learned that she bought 3 horses to fill her 3-horse trailer. But...she did have a pretty large tack room which was just perfect for little Celia

When Celia finally made it to Wildwood Farm the next day, our horses were not sure what to make of her. She was not a vocal as she was at the auction, but once she found her voice our horses were a little spooked at her volume. We put her in with the two minis we had and within a day or so they were fast friends.

Extra bonus – Celia was pregnant! 3 months later we welcomed her little son and named him Gepetto. Nothing is as cute as a mini donkey foal!

Celia and Gepetto left Wildwood Farm in 2008 for a breeding farm in Oregon.



HARD HORSE

WORD SEARCH



H	A	E	F	R	P	O	N	Y	A	N	Y	O	B	I	M
F	O	A	L	I	A	N	E	J	I	L	O	W	O	G	O
F	B	L	I	N	K	E	I	S	H	A	I	N	O	F	M
L	I	P	T	I	R	R	A	P	T	N	A	S	T	E	A
I	T	A	A	D	I	E	E	N	R	K	A	T	S	A	R
W	I	O	W	E	A	I	W	E	I	B	A	I	N	T	E
E	B	H	R	O	B	I	W	I	T	H	E	R	S	F	T
H	O	R	S	E	R	S	A	D	D	L	E	R	T	D	R
B	O	N	E	I	G	H	N	R	O	T	S	U	A	L	O
N	M	I	S	T	A	I	L	T	E	E	A	P	B	I	T
G	A	N	T	E	R	R	J	O	R	D	O	A	L	B	E
I	P	A	I	N	T	E	N	O	N	Y	I	R	E	U	M
E	A	D	R	E	S	S	A	G	E	P	D	T	B	T	A
R	S	A	E	R	R	H	D	G	F	R	E	N	H	A	N
R	H	I	D	S	H	E	D	L	E	N	T	R	O	H	E

- SADDLE
- SHIRE
- MANE
- TROT
- MARE
- HORSE
- TAIL
- STABLE
- FOAL
- STIRRUP
- WITHERS
- NEIGH
- DRESSAGE
- BOOTS
- PAINT
- PONY

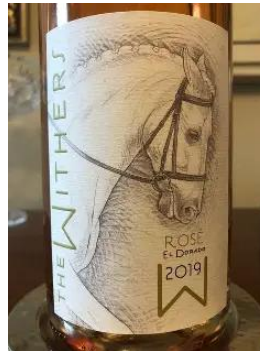
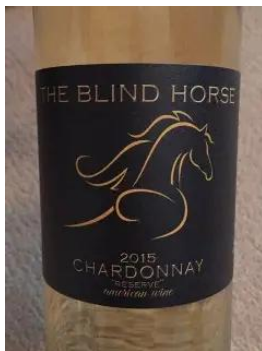
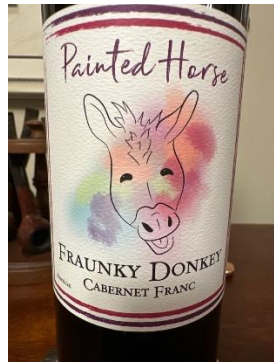
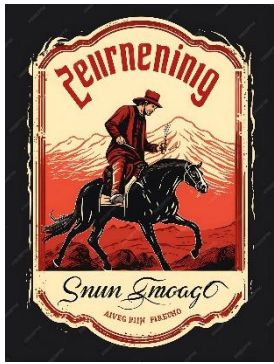
BY WILLOWBROOK RIDING CENTRE



We celebrate these Birthdays in February!

Kristin Mullen February 6th, Exsy February 6th,
Walter (Goat) February 25th, Timmee (cat) February 9th

MOST FABULOUS HORSE WINERY LABELS



Orleans, Massachusetts

Nauset Beach

Centuries-old hoofprints and wagon tracks reveal themselves after a good winter storm.



The same storms that have recently taken away the outer beach oversand track and the famous Liam's clam shack at Nauset Beach have also given something back to those interested in Cape Cod history. Centuries-old wagon tracks and hoofprints have emerged in several broad strips at the water's edge, revealing a hidden piece of the beach's past.

The prints have long been verbal lore among the old timers, but the physical evidence has been lacking since the storms typically erode the peat below the dunes in smaller chunks rather than intact sheets. But thankfully, when the recent storms unleashed their fury along the coast, they revealed entire canvasses covered with traces of past travelers rather than just fragmented bits.

These tracks were likely formed in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. They're more akin to a highway than a simple one-way path, with lines and indentations crossing one another in overlapping layers. Historians and archaeologists can date the tracks by calculating the time when the marsh that created the peat stood at this particular spot behind the former dunes.

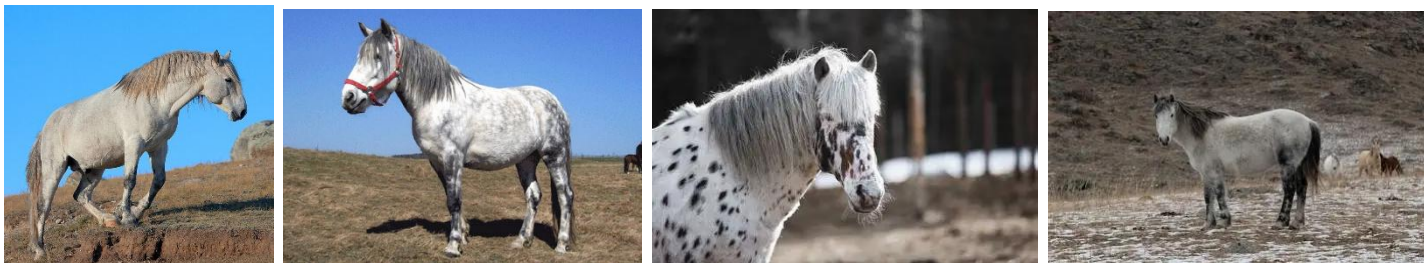
Measurements of the horseshoes could also show the ages and size of the horses, and the wheel tracks can indicate what style of carts and wagons were in use. Old coins have also been found speckled among the site.

Sadly, given that these old tracks only reveal themselves at the same time they're being destroyed by the tide, it's unlikely they'll be designated a permanent historical site. However, there's a good chance there are more prints still protected and obscured from sight beneath the sand, waiting to creep to the surface after the visible ones have vanished.

Know Before You Go

This site is commonly able to be seen/visited after winter storms on Nauset Beach and then within a few days cover up. See a video of the site here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oorL41np9_I

The Altai Horse



The Altai is a horse breed developed in the Altai Mountains of Central Asia. It is considered one of the oldest horse breeds in Siberia and has a rich history tied to the nomadic cultures of the region. The Altai were developed over a long expanse of time and have been significantly influenced by the harsh continental climate and the conditions specific to the mountain taiga which they call home.

Altai horses are well-adapted to the harsh and rugged terrain of the Altai Mountains. They have developed sturdy and compact builds, allowing them to navigate through difficult landscapes. These horses are known for their endurance, agility, and sure-footedness, which make them suitable for various tasks, including herding, transportation, and riding.

The Altai has a head with a slightly dished profile, set on a relatively short neck. They have a strong back, a well-developed croup, and short cannon bones. They stand an average of 13.2–13.3 hands high, and their coat colors are chestnut, bay, black, gray, and sometimes leopard spotted.

The Altai is highly adapted to year-round pasture grazing. They were bred for the characteristics most needed by the mountain tribesmen and nomads, including strong cardiovascular, respiratory, muscular and skeletal systems. They are also sure-footed over steep mountain trails. Altai crosses with pure breeds have a good performance. They are larger, more massive and stronger than the Altai while retaining their sound health and are undemanding as regards their management. Activities are underway to develop a new meat producing breed by crossing the Altai with the Lithuanian, Russian and Soviet Heavy Draught. These crossings were made after the revolution as well as under the Soviet government, and then the crossbred horses were bred "in purity."

This breed was reared in the Altai Mountains for many centuries and are well adapted to its harsh environment. Horses have always been important to the tribesmen and nomads in this mountainous region, requiring horses with a strong heart, lungs, muscles, and tendons along with very hard feet. A sure-footed horse is important, as they must travel over steep mountain trails cut from the rock and cross fast-moving streams and rivers. The development of the Altai has resulted in the creation of a hardy animal which is indispensable to the people who depend on it.



Cont'd from page 1

dull-eyed as others are led out to ride. I couldn't even contemplate a time when we didn't spend our days journeying in the mountains, reading each other's thoughts, the only sounds Angel's footfalls and the saddle's creaking leather.

"He trots to me in the pasture," I said, hoping my earnestness would convince the vet. "He bolts into the trailer."

"Comes a time when we're all a little short on wind," the vet said around the cigarette in his mouth.

For me the asthma had started two decades earlier, in my twenties, with an abrupt tightness in my chest and shortness of breath during trail runs. I attributed the coughing spasms to my stockiness and poor athleticism, and I persisted in jogging, determined not to let unfortunate genetics stop me. Despite the tautness and heaves, I relished my jogs, expelling stress into the coastal fog, experiencing joy with each step past live oaks and blackberries. I continued running well into my medical residency, until, one brisk Sunday morning, I attempted the Sacramento Half Marathon only to end up hunched over in the first-aid tent, sucking nebulized albuterol while the event's physician suggested I undergo pulmonary-function testing as soon as I had the time. But I never really had the time. Residency was too busy, with the long shifts and night call —When I thought about the lung studies, I bristled. Medical residents don't have control over much — not their schedules or their workload — but at least I had control over my health. I could handle a random wheeze the way I'd always handled problems, like many eldest children raised in an addict's household, I took on the caregiving, never receiving care myself.

After my residency, my husband's nephrology fellowship took us to Silicon Valley during the dot-com boom, and I worked three jobs to keep us afloat. At first I blamed the huffing and puffing on my lack of conditioning, as evidenced by my belly roll and chafing thighs. But one lunch hour, as I trudged up the Powerline Trail at Rancho San Antonio, my coughs halted me. I leaned over, hands on thighs. When it took too long for the corset around my chest to release, I slapped my palm against a live-oak trunk and remembered the half-marathon doctor's advice.

The truth struck me hard, and only then did I concede that, even on my best runs, my chest tightened, and my exhalations caught in my lungs. High pollen counts triggered coughing fits. Cold air stopped me dead. I leaned back onto my elbows and stared at the cloudless sky. My denial and hypocrisy embarrassed me. How many of my patients had annoyed me by dismissing the facts staring them in the face? *But how can I have high blood pressure? I feel fine!*

"Have you considered more age-appropriate exercise?" my new doctor asked as she stared at her computer, tapping keys.

By then my husband and I had left the bustle of Silicon Valley for an agricultural community north of San Francisco, and I had made this appointment to catch up on my health. When she'd asked about exercise, I'd chattered about my happy trail runs, but I'd dropped my voice and swallowed a few syllables when I'd mentioned my trouble breathing. She'd zeroed in on it.

"How about pulmonary-function tests?" my doctor asked, pulling a sheet of paper from an accordion file. She checked boxes, signed, handed it to me. "Have you considered asthma?"

I knew what I was supposed to do, the medications I was supposed to take. I'd counseled countless patients with this condition (*my condition*): a daily maintenance inhaler and an antihistamine pill like Zyrtec — and always carry an emergency "rescue" inhaler. I knew the consequences of untreated asthma: wheezing, fatigue, scarred airways, heart failure. I continued to dismiss it all. I *managed* illness; I didn't succumb to it.

Any nagging thoughts about controlling my asthma vanished entirely when I realized a longtime dream: I bought a horse. I'd been taking riding lessons for a few months when, taking a break at my desk one Tuesday, I opened dreamhorse.com — just to browse, see what was out there. In the lead ad I saw Angel for the first time: "Big, beautiful trail horse." He filled the screen with his palomino-and-white coat, his flaxen mane and tail, looking like sunshine against the grass. Seated among charts, medical texts, and anatomy models, I became as giddy as a young girl. His soft brown eyes reached for mine from the screen. I called the number.

"You're calling about Angel?" the seller asked. "Already?" She'd only just posted the ad.

From the time Angel arrived, we became a herd of two — "joined," as horse people say, ambling side by side to the pasture, eating lunch in the tall grass, moseying along the mountain trails. He had an uncanny ability to intuit what I needed on any given day, from friendship to protection. When I felt energetic — when open, flat ground stretched in front of us — I could feel the question in his back: *Go? Go?* And we would, the gentle wind brushing our faces. One afternoon, ignoring my pushing him forward, he sidestepped off the trail just before a mountain bike careened around a blind corner and passed us. Another time he refused to back out of the trailer, craning his head around to indicate a baby barn swallow that had fallen from a nest in the trailer's corner and landed in the dimple on Angel's substantial behind. And, ten years later, when the Tubbs wildfire destroyed

our community, displacing us to an isolated ranch in Montana's Bitterroot Valley, Angel became my closest, steadiest companion. We went exploring together among the ancient, vanilla-scented Ponderosas, underneath the big sky.

"Have you considered asthma?" asks the Montana veterinarian I've called to examine Angel. Her blond ponytail swings as she grabs a tablet from her truck's tailgate. "Does he cough?"

"Yes." I frown. "Mornings. And sometimes when we start out." Angel noses my hand. I show him it's empty, focus on the vet. "Can't believe I would have missed that," I say, thinking of all the times when Angel has breathed hard underneath me. I wrap my arms around him and inhale his grassy smell.

"With some horses it's subtle," the vet says. "They don't always wheeze." She opens drawers in her truck bed. "It's also treatable. Let's try these meds, see if he improves."

Now the sun is sinking behind the Bitterroots, and I am in my barn, squinting at Angel's tiny white Zyrtec pills, counting out twenty, soaking them, and mixing them with oats. I offer him the oat mix, sit back against Angel's stall wall, and watch him bury his head in the bucket.

"I am so sorry," I whisper, worried that I have failed him. He looks up, then dives in again, happy for the twice-daily oats.

In the morning I count out the pills again, this time with my reading glasses and headlamp to aid my aging eyes. Then, thirty minutes before we ride, I measure out exactly five milliliters of horse albuterol. "I hope this helps," I say, slipping Angel a peppermint to mask the taste.

Later we are climbing out of Calf Creek's northern ravine, where the trail switches back and traverses a high meadow before it descends by a circuitous route. Angel stops, eyeing the steepest section of trail, a serpentine path through jumbled boulders and lodgepole pines. He starts up again. I feel for his heaving sides, listen for his breath.

Angel slows where we usually rest, and I whisper, "It's OK," stroking his neck. "Let's take a break."

But Angel only pauses, takes a giant inhale that widens my legs, and charges like a young horse again. Joy fills my chest, and I feel the bunching in his back that indicates a gleeful buck coming. I allow it, since he is a geriatric gelding and I am (mostly) confident I will stay in the saddle.

On the return trip, climbing out of a stream bed, I hop off and walk beside Angel. He has done well, but I am afraid to push him too hard. We are best friends, bumping shoulders, sharing the secret of our special day. A breeze moves up the hillside, rippling the grasses, and I sneeze. Then it comes: the tightness, the cough. I stride on, unwilling to succumb. Near the top I bend forward, and before I know it, I am sitting in the dirt, looking up at filmy clouds moving past, sage poking my thigh.

Inhaling is hard work, and my exhales feel stretched thin like rubber bands. Angel stomps a fly, stirring dust, and when I look up, he is watching me struggle to breathe in, breathe out. Can he see that I am ashamed? My tears collect, not for me and my burning chest but for Angel, who felt this same pain, this same struggle, and I didn't help.

On the trail, the Montana sun cuts through the juniper, and my breath settles. It stuns me, the fractured emergence of my childhood world, the one that would not accommodate my vulnerability, my needs. An ache for that girl seeps into me like blood into a bandage. Then Angel bumps my shoulder, nuzzles my hair, blows his warm breath on my cheek. And I step out of the ache and into the sharp scent of sage, into bunchgrass and sand reed, into my middle-aged self, who is still the *worst* patient but who can no longer hide behind an old cliché; who has allowed a childhood with an alcoholic parent to hold her captive even as a middle-aged physician.

I drag air into my lungs, force it out. I start to hoist myself, then change my mind and fall back. Instead I reach up with two hands, and Angel responds by dipping his head toward me. I grab his generous mane, and together we raise me onto my boots. I glance at the saddlebags and wonder if there's a small pocket in them where I can stash my rescue inhaler, and if it's OK for me to pop a horse Zyrtec. Angel nickers, steps forward, eager for apples at the trailer. He looks back to make sure I follow.