



Frank Bell Horse Whisperer

Ambella Reincarnated

I was driving back to Colorado through Wyoming and feeling the need to connect with some creatures. My eyes were scanning the landscape for horses when entering the Popoagie reservation near Riverton, Wyoming. As I came over a rise after along uphill haul my eye caught a herd of horses running through the sagebrush in the waning sun. The dust was thick in the late dry fall as the horses circled and then settled at the bottom of the draw next to a very small creek. As I neared they drifted singly and in pairs into the water for a good drink then ambled back into the sage and began to graze, spreading out in search of the scant fall grasses. I parked about a hundred yards away and got out slowly. Just as I closed the door and was slipping on a coat, a beautiful buckskin emerged from the water. Our eyes met as water dribbled from her mouth. She was magnificent and almost statuesque as the sun gleamed off her deep tan coat, black mane and lower legs and the very pronounced black stripe that ran down the middle of her back.

My heart pounded as I walked toward her as she did the same. I felt an immediate connection as I was reminded of a horse named Ambella that had taken a piece of my heart with her early in my equine journey. She passed the other horses, several of them looking up as she walked by with purpose and direction. I hunkered down and worked my way through the barbed wire fence getting my coat caught en route. As I awkwardly tried to free myself from the barb, the buckskin approached. "Hey Baby," I purred. "What a pretty girl you are". She kept coming, but I still wasn't through the fence. In front of humans it's called embarrassment. In front of a horse it's about keeping cool. Again my attention was totally on my predicament. By now she was right there saying "You humans are something else." I finally backed off easing toward the road and the barb released itself. I slowly took my coat off and hung it off the fence post. She came right over and gave it a good sniffing as I worked my way through the fence and slowly approached my new friend.

"Well, aren't you something?", I said as I approached humbly and bent over. She lowered her head to meet mine and we exchanged air as our greeting. I tried to match her slow breathing with mine as my hand touched her shoulder stroking with the hair, then up to her neck. Where her neck met her chest I began scratching softly with the tips of my fingers, then increased the pressure. She arched her head up into the air at an odd angle with sheer delight. I knew I had her and quit. I very slowly eased off and behind her and walked to the fence post where my coat was hanging on the other side of my girlfriend. I took the coat and walked off down the fence line a couple of sections and put it on. Her head was high and inquisitive saying "Where do you think you are going?" "Come-on down here with your new Papa" I cooed. And she did. When she arrived I gave her a big rub beginning at the neck, then all over her body. When I got to her tail I scratched the dock vigorously. Again her head shot up into the air in ecstasy as her tail lifted and formed a perfect arch. I stroked the underside lightly as she enjoyed a place she'd most definitely never been with the human. Working the off side back to her head, we reconnected.



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I placed the palm of my hand over her left eye and rubbed lightly. She leaned into it with delight and began pushing against my hand as I rubbed harder. She pushed so hard I lost my balance. Laughing at where this was going I used her nose-handle and guided her head around to her offside. I slipped my little finger in her mouth and worked it around, then my index finger in her nose and breathed in her nose all at the same time. She stayed there only because she wanted to. I worked my left hand back to her flank and stroked with assurance. Her flanks quivered at my touch. Then I was above the tail, then under her upraised tail. We had achieved intimacy in a matter of a couple of minutes. I had her fore and aft and she remained there just loving it. I slowly brought my hands back to my sides and walked around the other side and picked up her near front foot. I worked circles clockwise and counter, she completely relaxed and trusting. Then I pulled her foot forward and extended it as far as I could. She stretched out enjoying the process. Then I did her off front leg the same way. "Completely relaxed and trusting" I said to myself. Fishing for my gloves as the sun ducked behind the butte to the west I found a couple pieces of yellow twine and made a loop on each end. I tied them together and slipped it over her neck creating a lead. We walked to a grassy area and did some dancing, she performing perfect ballet first turning on the forehand, then on the haunches. Our symmetry was magical. I finished by winding her back down to that intimate place we'd discovered only minutes before. She happily complied. About fifty yards off was a dead cottonwood lying down, offering a good mounting platform. I lined her up next to the tree and leaned over her, bellying her. She seemed a little unstable with my weight on her back and took a couple steps to balance herself. I stroked her off side and she turned her head to see and smell me there. I reassured with voice and stroking, then eased back off. I untied the twine, put one in my pocket, and placed the other around her neck and pulled back just slightly.. First she leaned into the pressure. I increased the tension to substantial and she leaned back. "Release" I said to myself and did. I stroked her lavishly and told her what a brilliant buckskin she was, then let it sink in for a few moments. She worked her mouth in understanding. The next time I applied a little pressure she immediately took a step back. Again big reward. I lined her up again next to the tree and lay over her back. Very slowly I slid my right leg over her rump staying low and stroking her neck the whole time, then slowly raised my body until sitting upright. I kept working that neck reassuringly and talking to her, then clucked and wiggled my seat. She took a shaky step forward and stopped abruptly. Again big rewards, then began again with slight leg agitation and some kissing. This time she walked off with confidence toward the creek. By now the light was fading fast and the cars on the highway were beginning to use their lights. We walked toward the creek and the other horses doing a couple of circles en route and a stop or two just to make sure I had some control.

But this was a little over the line. I didn't know this horse from Adam and had no idea how much riding she'd had. As we neared the other horses an old red ranch truck pulled over and honked. A grizzled and rough looking cowboy hurried out of the vehicle and yelled out "You crazy Mister? That horse ain't never been broke. What the hell are you doin? Who are you?" I leaned back and circled back to the road trying to act as nonchalant as I could thinking about my storyline. We walked right up to the fence and stopped and took two or three steps back. I released her neck and she stood perfectly still. "She invited me to go for a ride and I obliged her. I'm really sorry. I just stopped to get my hands on some horses and take a breather and enjoy the sunset. She right came up and wanted to make friends and well, one thing led to the next and here we are."



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"Well I'll be damned. I've never seen such a thing and a piece of twine on top of all that. My boss just won't believe it. We were kinda worried about riding her. She doesn't like people too much, that is usually. What are you? One a them horse whisperers or something?" "Something like that. Mind if I take her for a little ride before it gets too dark?" I asked. "You go right ahead. Just don't get hurt. I think Mr. Turner will be real happy about this. You lookin for a job by any chance? Got about a hundred to start this spring?"

"No, just passin through. Thanks for the visit."

I walked back toward the creek right by the herd. We went through it and up the other side where the footing looked good and broke into a trot up along the creek bottom. From the trot we drifted into an easy slow canter and followed the creek right up into the hills for a good two miles before it started getting rocky. We slowed to a walk, then crossed the creek and began traversing back to the road. The old ranch-hand was still watching from below, but then drove off as darkness pushed to day to an end. We communed as two best friends all the way down. Suddenly this connection again vividly reminded me of the same one I'd had with that special horse Ambella. We fit each other. It was perfect and felt right for both of us. These connections are rare lifetime events that usually come along out of the blue when we least expect it.

I eased off her back, removed the twine, and loved her all over. We melted right into each other both seeming to fully understand the depth of what had just taken place. She followed me back to the spot in the fence I'd gotten stuck. With a tear running down my cheek I bid farewell to a horse I'd probably never see again, but would remember always.