

Heavenly Horse Sense

Rebecca E. Ondov



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Names and minor details have been changed in some of these true stories to protect the privacy of the individuals involved.

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The Forge

*This third I will bring into the fire; I will refine
them like silver and test them like gold.*

ZECHARIAH 13:9

Billowy clouds drifted on a light breeze across the powder-blue Montana sky. My farrier's pickup and white trailer containing his shoeing supplies were parked on the dirt driveway by the barn. I leaned against the back of the metal trailer, holding SkySong's lead rope while he rested his head on Brian's chest. The powerful dapple gray-and-white gelding closed his eyes as Brian stroked his forehead. For a few moments the two of them stood quietly. Brian gently scratched SkySong's neck and under his breath asked him, "Are you ready to try something new? It's going to build your confidence."

Brian's green eyes twinkled when he turned to me and said, "I'd like to hot shoe SkySong today. I think it'll help him face some fears."

I tipped my head and ran my eyes over SkySong. I'd never seen a farrier use a forge to heat the steel horseshoes for a custom fit. I was curious to watch the process but was apprehensive about doing it with SkySong. He was young, and I was in the first stages of training him. I knew the noise of the blower on the propane-fueled forge would frighten him. I frowned as I thought of his timid character.

He was sure all new things contained a bogeyman. And that bogeyman had fangs dripping with blood and wanted to eat him. I inhaled a deep breath.

Brian grinned, “He needs to be stretched...challenged.” He patted SkySong’s forehead. “He’ll do fine.” He reached into his enclosed work trailer and lit the forge.

I never imagined that I would be the one who was changed by the forge.

With skillful hands, Brian trimmed and shaped SkySong’s hooves. Stepping into the trailer, he glanced at SkySong. “This is going to sound pretty scary.” Turning, he reached toward the forge and flipped on the blower.

Whoosh! It sounded like a small jet engine blasting air.

SkySong’s eyes bugged out. Every muscle rippled tight. His neck arched. He shifted his weight backward. He braced his front legs, staring at the forge and looking like he was going to bolt at any second.

Lightly I rested my hand on his neck, wondering, *Does he have the fortitude to stay with us? Or will he bolt and become more fearful?*

The steel shoes on the rack clanked together as Brian lifted one off and meandered to SkySong’s left shoulder. Lifting the hoof, Brian set the cold shoe on it, eyeing the shape to see what it needed to become.

SkySong focused on the bellowing forge. The whites of his eyes showed. The pulse in his throat pounded. His fear was so intense that it seeped into me. It was as if I was looking through eyes of fear—fear, a feeling I knew all too well—the haunting fears that I would make a horrible mistake, or the wrong decision, or even alienate myself from God. I rubbed my forehead. The only way SkySong could become free of his fears was to face them. *Will he do it or will he run?*

Brian stepped into the trailer, grasped the shoe with heavy-duty tongs, and held it inside the growling forge. When he withdrew it, heat waves danced off the glowing, reddish-orange metal. Watching SkySong out of the corner of his eye, Brian set the horseshoe on the

anvil, picked up the hammer, and slammed it against the shoe. The hammer rang against the steel. He paused.

SkySong's head swung up. His nostril's flared. Wide-eyed he stepped back.

The hammer sang. SkySong shuddered with each blow. Sweat beaded behind his ears and dripped down his neck.

Brian dropped the shoe into the "slack tub" containing water. The shoe fizzed. Grabbing it with tongs, Brian pulled out the cooled shoe and strolled next to SkySong's shoulder, lifted the foot, and set the shoe in place. "Almost," he said.

I cringed as Brian thrust the metal back into the blasting forge. Then I watched the most amazing thing. Although the blower on the forge still sounded like a jet engine, SkySong now watched Brian out of curiosity instead of fear. This time when he set the red-hot shoe on the anvil and the hammer rang with each blow, SkySong lowered his head. Stroking his neck, I watched the muscles in his body ripple as they relaxed. I could almost see his mind at work: *This scary thing has happened before and it didn't hurt, so it must be okay.*

I wound a strand of his black mane around my finger. Brian wasn't just forging steel. With each blow he was forging SkySong's character with more confidence.

As I watched Brian's powerful arm wield the hammer, it was as if in the recesses of my mind I was watching God fashion the cold steel of my life. When I give my insecurities and fears to God, He puts them into His forge and heats them with His love until they are malleable. Then He creates confidence and trust. He takes my shortcomings and mistakes, and with artistic hands skillfully molds and shapes them into a valuable life. His forge isn't something to be feared or dreaded. It's where I become empowered. In the fire of His presence, He gives me the strength to go on.

While Brian continued to work with SkySong, I was lost in my reflections of God's forge, marveling that the God who created the universe loved me so much that He personally tailored an armored

suit of His love to protect me—enabling me to stand in the face of my fears and conquer them.

Lord, thank You for revealing to me that Your forge isn't a place to hurt me; instead, it's a place where Your glowing love encompasses me. Amen.