

ANIMALS TO THE  
**RESCUE!**



# Sergeant Reckless

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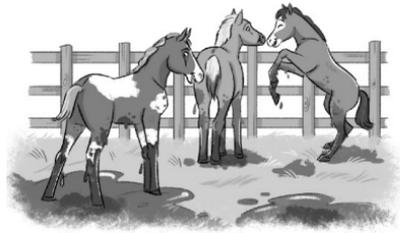
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# A Hero Is Born

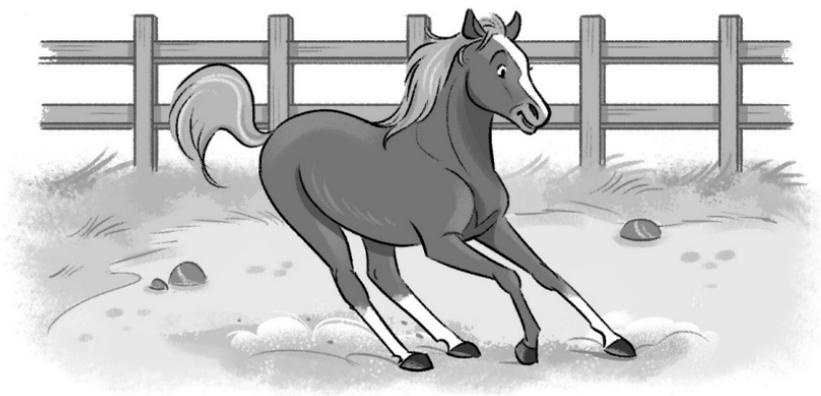
SEOUL, KOREA

1949



**T**he white pony was very muddy. She must have rolled in the pasture overnight, and now she was caked with dirt from her neck to her tail. Kim Huk Moon sighed when he saw her. He'd need the big brush for this grooming job. Huk Moon jogged to the supply room at the Sinseol-dong racetrack stable to collect his supplies. On his way back, something caught his eye.

A few young racehorses were playing in one of the big enclosures. They were yearlings—just babies, really. As Huk Moon watched, they pretended to fight one another, rearing up and squealing in play anger. Then he saw her—a beautiful filly with a sleek red coat.



The horse tossed her head and pranced, noticing Huk Moon. Then she took off on a gallop around the fence. Huk Moon couldn't stop staring. Her long legs ate up the dirt. Her tail floated in the wind,

and her bright coat shone like copper. She ran like a beautiful song.

The grooming bucket fell from Huk Moon's fingers. He knew this horse. He'd been there when she was born. For one year, he'd tried to forget she existed. Now his memories came flooding back. His horse. His Flame.

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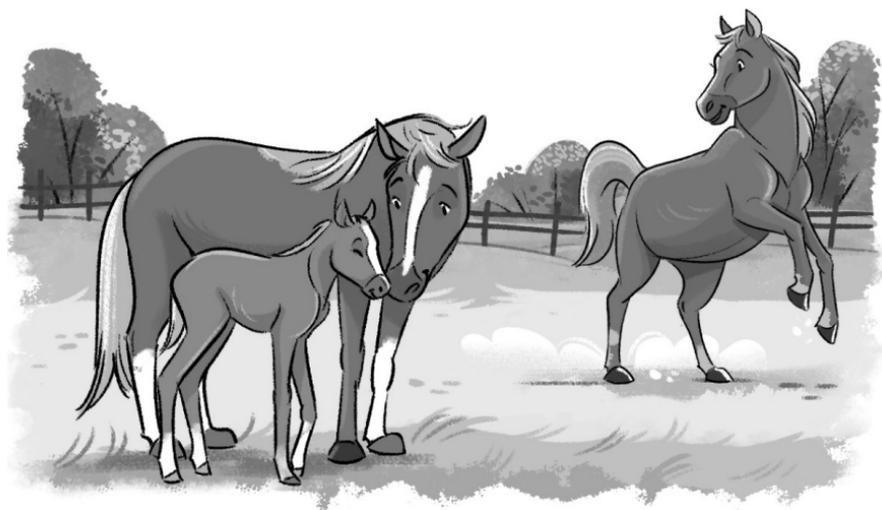
The red filly's mother was called Ah-Chim-Hae, or "Flame of the Morning." She and Huk Moon had won many races together at Seoul's Sinseol-dong racetrack over the years. Ah-Chim-Hae was Huk Moon's partner and friend.

When Ah-Chim-Hae gave birth to a foal, Huk Moon called the baby Flame, after her mother. Baby Flame's coat was a glowing copper brown. She had a wide white stripe down her nose, called



a “blaze,” and white markings on her legs, called “stockings.” No one knew Flame’s breed for sure, but she was most likely a type of pony called a Jeju. Jeju ponies were small and had short legs and sturdy bodies. They were also extremely strong, which made them perfect for carrying jockeys, or riders, during races.

For the first days of her life, Flame lived by her mother’s side. She played around Ah-Chim-Hae’s legs. She felt her mother nuzzle and groom her back and mane. But only one week after giving birth, Ah-Chim-Hae fell ill and died in Huk Moon’s arms. His beloved mare was gone.



Huk Moon was heartbroken. He could not bear to look at the little foal, who reminded him so much of her mother. A fellow jockey had a mare who had also recently given birth. She could care for Flame along with her own foal, the jockey said.

Huk Moon agreed. He left Flame with her foster mother and fled Sinseol-dong. He had to leave the memories of Ah-Chim-Hae behind.

In November 1948, when Flame was about five months old, Huk Moon started to return to the racetrack and began riding horses at Sinseol-dong again. Still, he kept his distance from the young racehorse.

When Huk Moon saw Flame playing in the enclosure that day, everything changed. Memories of Ah-Chim-Hae came crashing over Huk Moon. It was as if her mother had risen from the dead.

Huk Moon moved the young filly into her mother's old stall. He took charge of her training and began preparing her for her racing debut. Huk Moon quickly saw that Flame was special. She was very smart. She only had to be shown a new skill once or twice before she remembered it. She loved being around people. And she was fast. Huk Moon

couldn't wait for the day when Flame would prance onto the racetrack in front of the crowds of Seoul.

But the world had other plans for Huk Moon and Flame. In June 1950, as the opening of the racing season approached, so did the Korean War.

For many years, Korea had been a divided country. The Soviet Union and the United States had controlled the country since the end of World War II. They had split Korea into two parts. The



Soviet Union supported the north and the United States supported the south. The Koreans themselves had no voice in these decisions.

Not all was well with this arrangement. The United States government was uneasy. They were afraid the Soviet Union and the North Koreans would use their army to take over South Korea.

On June 25, 1950, that fear came true. Seventy-five thousand soldiers from North Korea's People's Army crossed the border into South Korea with the full support of the Soviet Union.

When the invasion happened, Huk Moon was at the racetrack. He made his decision immediately. He wouldn't stay and watch the bombs fall on Flame and his family. He and the horse raced home. He harnessed Flame to a cart and loaded

his mother; his sister, Chung Soon; and her two children inside. All around them, frantic people were fleeing the city with their belongings in their arms or piled into carts. Loudspeakers ordered soldiers to their posts. Flyers announcing the invasion were dropped from planes, raining down like dangerous white rain.

Through the chaos and fear, Flame pulled the rickety wooden cart two



hundred miles south, bringing Huk Moon and his family to some bit of safety in the city of Busan. There, they moved into a friend's home, where Flame was introduced to her father for the first time. Flame and Huk Moon went to work hauling military supplies from the American ships waiting at the docks. Busan was a safe place, but war raged just outside its borders. For Flame and Huk Moon, Sinseol-dong must have seemed as far away as the stars in the night sky. The racetrack was their home. Now they wondered if they would ever see it again.