



The  
Princess  
and the  
Foal

Stacy Gregg



A real life princess,  
a forever friendship

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The  
Princess  
and the  
Foal



Stacy Gregg



HarperCollins *Children's Books*

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*Is it true you ask? And I say yes, especially the most extraordinary bits, they are the very truest of all*

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To Her Royal Highness Princess Haya Bint Al Hussein.

Thank you for sharing your incredible story with me, and to all the other princesses who dare to dream.

*This book is a work of fiction, inspired by the early life of Her Royal Highness Princess Haya Binet Al Hussein. Any historical events, real people or real locales in this novel are portrayed fictitiously. Other names, characters and incidents are the product of the author's imagination and any resemblance to actual events or locales or persons living or dead is entirely coincidental.*

**H**ello, Mama,

I am underneath my blankets with a torch as I write this. I don't dare turn the lights on because Frances might see and know that I am awake, and the last person I want to deal with right now is Frances.

I should be asleep, but I am too full of nerves about tomorrow. Santi has a calendar in his office at the stables and I have marked off the squares in red pen one by one, the knot in my belly tightening as the day grows closer. For a long time it seemed forever away. And now suddenly there is no more time waiting. In a few hours it will be dawn and I will go down to the stables and prepare Bree. I'll braze her tail and bandage her legs and then we will load the horses on to the truck and travel across the desert, bound on a journey that must end in either defeat or honour and glory for the Royal Stables.

I am trembling as I write these words to you and I tell myself that it is not fear, it is excitement. In all the history of the King's Cup there has never been a girl rider. But I am not just a girl. I am a Bedouin of the Hashemite clan and I was born to ride. Thousands of years ago the women of my tribe sat astride their horses in battle and fought side by side with men. Well, I do not want to fight – all I want to do is win.

A thousand faces will stare down from the grandstand tomorrow. Baba will watch me from the Royal Box with Ali by his side, and no doubt Frances will have elbowed her way in too. She'll be waiting for me to fail, to make a fool of myself in front of all those people. All the time undermining me to Baba, saying it is not right for the daughter of the King of Jordan to spend her time hanging around the stables, mucking out the dung. She is always trying to make me into something I am not.

Frances wants me to be like some princess in the storybooks – confined to my tower, dressed in ball gowns and a golden crown and glass slippers. I mean, who in their right mind would wear glass slippers? If I had my way, I would wear jodhpurs all day long.

“Your mother always depicted herself as a gracious lady.” That is exactly what Frances says. She talks so posh sometimes it is as if she is the royal one not just my governess.

Frances is always telling me I should be more like you. It is so annoying because if you were actually here then I wouldn't have to listen to her. I would be allowed to do as I like and I would never have to wear stupid dresses to dinner or put up with any of the rules that Frances makes up.

I tell her that you were a Queen, but you wore a T-shirt and jeans. I remember your favourite pair of red jeans. The ones you bought in Rome when you were very young, before you married Baba.

You wore those red jeans and your long hair was always loose over your shoulders and swept back off your face. I have grown my hair long now too, but it is plain brown. Baba insists that I look just like you, but you always looked like a movie star to me with your green eyes and dark blonde hair. If I close my eyes sometimes, I can see your face and hear your laughter like music filling the palace at Aqaba Nadwa.

I remember I would ask you, “Can I become a Queen one day?” and your answer was always the same. You would tell me, “Haya, you are a Princess of Jordan. Perhaps one day you will be a Queen. *Inshallah*. But remember your title is on a piece of paper, on a page of a history book, no more than that. It's what you have inside that means everything. You must always be yourself, Haya, never pretend. Do you understand?”

I would look at your face and you would be very serious, but then you would pick me up and smother me with kisses until I giggled and we would laugh together as you held me close in your arms.

The last time I asked you this question we were in the gardens at Al Nadwa. It was a summer day and you had spread a blanket on the lawn in the shade of the big pomegranate tree. Ali was there with us too, playing with his toys. At least I think Ali was there. Sometimes I wonder if I am making him up. I am twelve now and that day has faded in my mind like an old photograph.

I have another memory and this one is very clear. We are outside Baba's office, you and me and Ali. You are kneeling down on the marble floor in front of Ali, grasping his tiny hands as he wobbles on his chubby little legs.

He steadies himself and then gently, carefully, you let him go. You keep your arms encircling him as Ali rocks back and forth, but he doesn't fall and you smile with delight and pick him up and say, "Oh, my darling Ali. Now that you can stand on your own feet I can leave you for a while."

Mama, I have been doing my best to stand up, to find my feet without you there to hold my hand. My two legs were not strong enough at first, but then Bree came along with four legs to carry us both. Her heart and courage gave me the strength that I needed.

I wish you could be there to see me ride her tomorrow. Baba says that if I have something important to tell you, I should write to you. But I could never do it. Not until tonight. I have so much to tell you about me and Bree and everything that has happened since you've been gone. But it is very late and my hand is getting cramp. It is quite hard writing on a mattress when you are holding a torch in one hand and trying to breathe under the blankets. If you were here, you would tell me to finish the letter tomorrow and get some sleep.

Mama, you know how I said I wasn't afraid? Well, maybe I am, just a little. This is the greatest contest in the kingdom; what if Bree and I are not good enough? I do not care that Frances and her supporters think it is wrong for a princess to ride. But I know how important this is to our people and I feel the weight of expectation upon me. When I ride into that arena, I carry their hopes along with me and I am determined that I will not let them down. I do this to make Baba proud, but also to prove myself, to show them that when I am on a horse I am the equal of any man.

I am a princess, but this is no fairy tale. If it were then I would know what is to come, my happy ever-after. But I do not yet know how the story will end. All I know is that this story of me and Bree begins like fairy tales do:

*Many years ago, once upon a time in Arabia ...*



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*The Storm*

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**T**wo lions stand guard at the entrance to the Royal Palace. They stand upright on all fours, alert and ready. Their powerful, sleek bodies are golden in the afternoon sun.

If the lions turned round, just a whisker, then they would see the little girl who stalks up silently behind them. But they do not move; their eyes stay trained on the stairs below.

The girl tiptoes forward in *one-two-three* quick strides. She has chosen her lion and in a bold leap she vaults up his rump and on to his back. Heart racing, she reaches out with both hands and grasps his mane tight and then she digs her tiny heels into the lion's flanks.

"Go!" she commands. "Go now!"

Leaning low over his mane, she kicks him on, the way she has seen her uncle ride his polo ponies. Just ten metres away there is a massive stone wall that borders the palace compound. If she can ride fast enough then the lion will leap the wall and they'll keep riding out across the green lawns of the Royal Court. Then beyond the next wall until the pink limestone buildings of Amman disappear and all that is left is the bleached, sunburnt sand of the Arabian desert. A lion can travel swiftly across the sand on his padded paws, but first they must leap the wall!

She is pressing the lion on, crouching low, legs kicking and arms pumping, when she senses a tall dark shadow looming over her.

"Your Royal Highness."

The little girl looks up and smiles at the kindly face of Zuhair, head of the Royal Household Staff.

"Princess Haya," Zuhair says, "Queen Alia is looking for you."

Haya swings her leg over and then slides down the rump of the statue, landing neatly on her feet and running on ahead of Zuhair. She is three years old, with bright brown eyes and shoulder-length dark hair. Small for her age, her skinny arms are only just strong enough to push open the massive frosted glass doors of the palace that are made of heavy teak studded with brass orbs the size of her head.

In the hallway the portraits of Kings look down on her as she skips along, her feet pattering against the cool marble floor. She likes the way their eyes follow her as she runs by. Her father is King, but his portrait is not on the wall. Whenever they have tried to hang his portrait, her Baba always says no thank you because he has no wish to stare at himself all day. He prefers photos of tanks and boats, and horses of course. Her Baba loves horses, just like Haya.

They call her father the Lion of Jordan, but Haya has never heard him roar. He is a soft-spoken man, handsome with short-cropped dark hair and a moustache. His dark eyes are bright with intelligence and his smile is gentle and kind.

But today, when Haya peeks in from the hallway through the door of his office, her Baba is not smiling. He sits at his desk, his brow furrowed deep with concern. In the centre of the office there is a large bearskin rug and her Mama is there too, standing on the bear and holding her little brother Ali close to her hip.

"I have spoken to the officials in Tafilah," the Queen says. "Conditions there grow more desperate by the hour. Refugees are pouring in. Many of them are women and children and they need food and medicine. The hospital staff are exhausted. There are no beds left. People are sleeping on floors and



without blankets. They cannot wait another day. I should go there this afternoon in the helicopter and take them medicines and supplies while you meet with the foreign delegates in Aqaba.”

Prince Ali squirms on the Queen’s hip as she speaks. Only this afternoon he stood up for the first time and now he is reluctant to be restrained by his mother’s arms any longer. His sturdy little legs kick out as he wriggles in a bid for freedom.

The worried expression does not leave the King’s face at his wife’s suggestion. “Alia, we agreed on breakfast that you would take the car. It is too dangerous to fly with a storm coming.”

“If I take the helicopter then I can be home again by nightfall,” the Queen says. And then before her husband can object she adds, “Badr Zaza has offered to fly me.”

Badr Zaza is the King’s own pilot and in all of Jordan there is no one better. The King nods in agreement at his wife’s plan. “If Badr Zaza is willing to undertake the journey then I know you will be safe ...”

“I want to come too.”

It is Haya. She is standing in the doorway, eyes bright with excitement.

“Haya,” her Mama cautions. “What did I say at dinner last night? I told you, if you wanted to come with me, you had to eat your steak and your Brussels sprouts.”

“Ali didn’t eat his either!” Haya offers as her defence.

“Ali is staying home too,” her Mama says, rocking Haya’s brother gently on her hip. “Grace will take care of you until I get home and next time, if you eat everything on your plate, then you may come with me, OK?”

There is a storm coming, but right now the sun still shines on the palace. On the lawn, not far from the pomegranate tree where Haya played that morning with her mother, a helicopter roosts like a sleeping dove.

“Are you going to fly away?” Haya asks her mother.

“Yes,” the Queen says, “but Grace will look after you while I am gone.”

Grace, their nanny, stands beside them on the balcony that leads to the lawn. She is holding Prince Ali in her arms. Grace is nice; she bakes biscuits.

Haya frowns. “Will you tuck me in?”

“Not tonight. Baba will be home in time to put you to bed and I will be there when you wake up in the morning.”

Grace reaches out to take Haya’s hand. It is time to say goodbye.

“Be good, Haya,” her mother whispers in her ear as she bends down and kisses her.

The Queen kisses Ali too and then sets off across the lawn towards the helicopter.

“*Wait! Mama!*” Haya shouts, but the helicopter engine roars to life and drowns her words. Grace’s hand is clasped firmly over hers, anchoring her to the balcony. Then suddenly Grace’s hand is empty. Haya has broken free and is running helter-skelter after her mother across the flat, green lawn.

The Queen has almost reached the helicopter by the time the little princess catches up with her.

“*Mama!*” Haya’s tiny hands clutch at the Queen’s trouser leg. Startled, her mother looks down and sees Haya standing there beside her. Above their heads the blades of the helicopter begin to turn. The dove is waking.

Haya has something to tell her Mama, but her voice is too light as the engines of the helicopter thrum overhead. Her words are lost the moment they leave her lips. “*Don’t go!*” she shouts. “*Stay with me. I love you, Mama.*” And then she looks up into her mother’s eyes and Haya realises that she does not need to say anything because her mother understands.

The Queen bends down and picks up her daughter, taking her in her arms and hugging her tight. She kisses her one last time, and Haya feels the softness of Mama's skin. Then Grace is beside them and her mother is passing her over into the nanny's arms. Grace, who is still holding Ali, manages to straddle Haya on one hip and Ali on the other as she walks back to the garden terrace.

The helicopter blades turn slowly and then faster and faster until they are a blur. The wind gets stronger and whips at Haya's hair, flattens the flowers in the gardens below.

At first, the helicopter rocks up off the ground and bumps back down again as if it cannot make up its mind. Then, suddenly, it lifts up like a leaf caught by a gust of wind, rising straight into the air. It hovers for a moment and then arcs away, clearing the high palace walls and the tops of the trees beyond, setting a flight path towards the distant hills.

Haya tries to keep watching it, but the sun blinds her eyes. She shuts them tight, just for a moment, and when she opens them again, the helicopter is gone.

\*

Haya curls herself up tightly into a ball. It is pitch-black in here, but nice and warm too, and she has her favourite toy, Doll, with the pink hat and sewn-on eyes and squishy cotton legs, with her for company.

"Shhhh," she whispers to Doll. "I can hear them coming. Be quiet now or they will find us."

There are voices outside and then car doors slamming. Haya feels her heart racing as the engine begins to purr. They are moving!

Uh-oh. The car has stopped again. There is the sound of voices once more and then footsteps, and suddenly the car boot is wide open and she is blinded by the glare of daylight.

"Haya! Not again!"

It is Baba. He has opened the car boot and found her!

"Haya." The King hardly seems surprised to see his daughter in the boot of the car. "Out you go please. I need to go now."

The first time Haya hid in the boot of Baba's Mercedes she made it all the way to Aqaba. But ever since then the King has been wise to her tricks and he always checks the car before he drives off.

Haya unfurls herself slowly and reluctantly, as if stalling for time will help matters.

"Please can I come?" she asks hopefully. "I won't be any trouble."

The King tries to suppress a smile at her antics as he bends down and lifts her out of the boot. "Somehow I find that very hard to believe."

Haya isn't going anywhere and so it is up to Grace to keep her amused. That afternoon they are baking biscuits in the palace kitchen. Grace makes them with dates and almonds and it is Haya's job to roll the mixture into little balls, dip them in sugar and then squish them down with a fork before they are put on the baking tray.

Ismail, the head chef, is grumpy that they are taking up his kitchen space. He doesn't complain how can he tell off the daughter of a King? But he does clatter about, making extra loud noise banging his pots and pans as he cooks. He is making *mansef* for dinner: a rich dish of lamb with rice and thick pungent yoghurt. *Bedouin food*, Ismail calls it, one meal powerful enough to sustain you for many days.

This is what Haya's ancestors survived on during nomadic voyages across the great deserts. Her great-grandfather, King Abdullah, ate *mansef* with Lawrence of Arabia when he led the Bedouin army in the Arab Revolt.

Haya never met her great-grandfather, but she has seen his portrait on the wall of Kings. Baba was with him on the day that he died. He was accompanying his grandfather to pray, climbing the stairs of the mosque in Jerusalem, when an assassin opened fire. King Abdullah was shot and Haya's father would have been killed too if he had not worn his new uniform that day, with his medal for sword fighting pinned over his heart. The medal stopped a bullet and saved her father's life.

Haya's father, Hussein, has been the King since he was seventeen years old. Presidents and prime ministers, kings and queens all come to Al Nadwa to meet him. They sit and talk for hours, but they never bring their children with them to play. It is all very, very dull as far as Haya is concerned.

During these visits there are grand dinners and the kitchen becomes a flurry of activity with several cooks working at once – so Haya cannot understand why Ismail is so grouchy about sharing his kitchen today. Surely there is enough space for her and Grace to bake biscuits alongside him?

When the biscuits are ready, they eat them in the Blue Room. It is much smaller than the grand dining room and is just for family. Everything about it is very blue – blue walls, blue curtains, even blue plates and water glasses. Haya likes to pick the glasses up and look through them so her food is blue too.

No matter how busy her father is, he always eats breakfast with them, but often he does not make home in time for dinner. Kings have a lot of work to do.

“Your father is the King of a nation,” her Mama says. “The people of Jordan are all your brothers and sisters and we must love and care for them just like we care for you.”

Haya has millions of brothers and sisters. But she mostly has Ali and there are only three places set at the dinner table that night for her and Ali and Grace because her Baba has not returned from Aqaba and Mama is still in Tafilah at the hospital. Usually at dinner everyone laughs and talks, but tonight is quiet and Grace is acting very strangely as if she is anxious about something. Haya wonders if it has anything to do with the phone call that she took just before dinner.

There is a storm coming. Outside the windows of Haya's bedroom the tops of the palm trees are bending and swaying in the wind. When Grace puts Haya to bed she stays with her for a long time because the noises are quite scary – even when you are brave like Haya.

“I want to stay up until Baba and Mama get home,” Haya says as Grace tucks her in. Haya's bedroom is upstairs and her bed is right beside the window. She likes to lie there and gaze up at the aeroplanes. The palace is so close to the airport that when the planes take off Haya thinks she could actually stick her hand out and touch their bellies. She likes to stare at the lights twinkling red, green and white on the tips of their wings as they fly overhead. But tonight there are no planes to watch. The winds are too strong and the airport has been closed.

Grace strokes her hair, then tucks Doll tightly into bed beside her. “Go to sleep. I will be in the room next door with Ali.”

Haya squirms about to get comfy, wrestling with Doll beneath the blankets. She cannot sleep. The wind is howling now. Outside her window the palm trees are being shaken like rag dolls.

In the blackness of her bedroom, Haya clutches on to Doll. Fresh thunder rolls across the heavens and she is just about to call out for Grace when she hears the sound of voices, coming from downstairs. They are home!

Grasping Doll by the arm, Haya swings her legs over the side of the bed and scampers across the landing.

As she comes down the stairs, she can see her father. He is home and he has company. The King is speaking to a man in uniform, one of the Royal Staff. The man has his head bowed as he hands an object to her father, something small and shiny.

*“Baba!”*

Haya dashes down the staircase. The King turns to see the little princess in her pyjamas, clutching dolly with a pink hat, and that is when Haya realises with shock that he is crying.

Haya has never seen her father cry before. He weeps openly, letting the tears run down his cheeks without trying to wipe them away.

“Haya.” Her Baba picks her up and his arms feel strong and safe around her. “It’s OK ...”

Haya hugs him tight and buries her face in his chest, but as she does so, she catches a glimpse of the object that he cradles in his right hand. The small and shiny thing that the man passed to him. Haya can see now what it is.

The shattered remains of her Mama’s wristwatch.

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*The Legend of Al Khamseh*

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**B**aba cradles Haya as she sobs. She cries so hard, the tears threaten to choke her and she cannot breathe. She clings to Baba, and his arms are strong as he holds her tight and close, and yet it is not enough to comfort her. She wants her Mama. But her Mama is not coming home. Not tonight. Not ever again.

This is what Baba has told Haya. He said that Mama was very brave to go to Tafilah, knowing that the storm was coming. She helped the people in the hospital, gave them blankets and medicine and food. The skies were black when they left the hospital, but the pilot hoped they might outrun the thunderclouds. They were high above the desert on the outskirts of Amman when the storm caught up to them and lightning struck the helicopter.

That night Haya does not leave her Baba's side. Even when Baba has to go on the radio and tell the whole country that the Queen has died, he keeps her close to him. She sits on his lap as he writes the words that he will say to the nation. When he speaks on the radio, a soft, fuzzy noise can be heard in the background. It is the sound of Ali's breath drawing in and out as he dozes peacefully in the King's arms.

That night Haya sleeps with Ali in the big bed with Baba. When she wakes up, the storm is gone. And so is Mama.

At first, she does not truly believe it. Any moment now, Haya expects Mama to walk in, with her arms open wide, her voice lilting and musical as she calls out Haya's name.

*She will come back, Haya thinks. She cannot really be gone.*

But there is no Mama at breakfast or to brush her hair or choose her clothes, and Ali will not stop crying. He cries because he does not understand why Mama won't come to him.

"Shhh, Ali, it's me. I am here." Haya lowers the rail on the cot and climbs in beside her brother. Ali's tiny face is streaked with tears and his little hands clutch tightly on to his blanket. Haya lies down with him and holds him until he stops crying.

By dinnertime, Haya has decided that it is all her fault. She is the reason that Mama is gone, but it's OK because she can fix it. That night, when her meal is served, she eats all her meat. She almost gags as she chews the steak, but she cleans her plate and she is pleased with herself. That will do the trick. Now Mama will come back.

But the meat doesn't work. And even the next night when she eats her meat all up again, plus Brussels sprouts as well, there is still no Mama. Haya is beginning to think that no matter how much meat she eats, Mama will not come home. By the third night, Haya pushes her plate aside and stares at the steak as if it now silently carries the blame. She will never eat it again.

Every night Baba stays at her bedside and strokes her hair until she sleeps, but he cannot stop the nightmares that wake her, leaving her alone in the darkness, sobbing. They are nightmares about her Mama in the storm. Haya sees the moment when the lightning struck. Was Mama afraid when she fell from the sky? Did it hurt?

In the first days after the crash the palace was stunned into silence. Now it becomes noisy as the

whirl of preparations begin for the state funeral. Dignitaries from across Arabia and around the world come to pay their respects. Haya's aunts and cousins are so very kind to Haya and Ali; in a strange way it is almost like a party with everyone here together. And then suddenly everyone is gone once more and the palace feels cold and empty without Mama's laughter.

Haya's footsteps echo through the corridors. The palace has changed. She tries to bake biscuits like she used to, but it is weird how Ismail never, ever gets cross, even when she is in his way. He keeps looking at Haya, his eyes misty, as if he is about to cry. There is so much sorrow here that Haya cannot stand it.

"It's OK," Baba says. "I know a place where we can go."

When the Mercedes arrives, Grace, Haya and Ali pile into the back seat and the King sits up front with his bodyguard as they cruise out of the palace gates into the grounds of the Royal Compound.

There is a checkpoint at the edge of the compound and their driver pulls over to speak to the guard at the gate. The guards salute and wave them on and very soon they have left the compound and the suburbs of Amman behind them and they are climbing the hills into the forest. The road twists and winds through the pine trees. It is a hot day, but inside the air-conditioned car they are cool.

Grace tries to talk, but Haya turns her head away and stares out at the tree shadows flickering shafts of sunlight on the tinted windows, her thoughts lost in the woods. She has no words left. She does not want to talk, not about anything and especially not about Mama.

At the crest of the hill there is a pair of white posts with bright blue wrought-iron gates. The car turns here and there are tall palm trees bordering the driveway on both sides, and ahead of them the whitewashed buildings of Al Hummar, the Royal Stables.

The stables look like a white Spanish castle, the doors and windows trimmed in bright blue paint. Brilliant red flowers spill out of terracotta pots and purple vines climb the archways that lead through to the stables. There are two courtyards, and in the first of these is a drinking pool with blue painted tiles and a fountain in the middle so the horses can pause in the yard each day to take their fill. The ground around the fountain is hard as rock, baked by the sun and worn smooth by horses' hooves. The only thing that grows here is an ancient grey-green olive tree, its twisted boughs providing shade from the heat of the day.

Around the edge of both courtyards are the loose boxes, hidden beneath the shade of Spanish arches. And inside the loose boxes are horses.

The horses at Al Hummar are the most beautiful in all of Arabia. To Haya they are enchanted creatures, with silken manes, muzzles soft as velvet and dark eyes that can see into her soul.

There are fifty horses here and all are pure-bred Arabian. Santi is in charge of Al Hummar. His real name is Mr Santiago Lopez and he built these stables for Haya's father, modelling them on his own back home in Spain. There is always music pouring out of Santi's office in the first courtyard. "It makes the horses want to dance," Santi says and Haya is not sure whether to believe him or not.

*Titch.* That is what Santi calls her and now he says, "Ah, Titch, thank goodness you have arrived. The horses have been asking me all morning when you would come!"

Haya does not say a word, but Santi is undaunted by her silence.

"You talk too much, Titch!" he tells her. "Be quiet, little one, you will scare the horses with all your noise!"

And Haya cannot help but smile just a little bit. Santi does not fuss over her the way they do at the palace. He does not look at her as if she is an object of pity. He leaves her to roam the stable yards and he talks with the King while Grace sits in the sunshine with Ali asleep, cradled in her arms.

Santi always has a pot of hot cardamom coffee on the hotplate beside his desk. He pours a cup for

the King and Grace and puts the needle down on the record player, the strains of Spanish music filling the courtyard.

They sit outside the office and watch the young fillies gather at the water trough like a group of girls sharing secrets. When these fillies with their slender, dainty legs like ballerinas grow up, the rose-grey dapples on their rumps will fade and they will be pure white, like their mothers who stand in the shade of the loose boxes watching over them.

The mares, fillies, colts and stallions all live together. Haya knows most of them by name and she makes her rounds to say hello. She is too little to look over the doors, so she has to climb up to see inside the loose boxes, hanging on to the wooden rails as she pays each horse a visit.

Of course she has her favourites. There is the chestnut mare Jamila who looks like a seahorse with flared nostrils and a wide forehead. Jamila has a pretty white blaze and a golden mane that hangs down all the way past her shoulders. She has won many ribbons and rosettes because of her beauty. Beside Jamila is Bahar, an elegant, freckled grey stallion with enormous brown eyes rimmed with long black lashes that flutter like a movie star. Bahar is aloof, he does not always want to say hello but Haya persists, holding out a handful of alfalfa until he finally deigns to take it from her.

The last box that Haya visits is that of her most favourite of all, a mare named Amina.

Amina's box is down the driveway in the second courtyard. She is a bay mare, with a deep red coat and lustrous jet-black mane. Black stockings run up her legs all the way to her hocks.

Most Arabians have delicate muzzles, but Amina's nose is not so pretty. She is a Desert Born Arabian with coarser features, a flatter profile and heavier jaw. Amina is built to jump. She is one of the best jumpers in the stables; fast and fearless.

Whenever Haya comes to the stables, she always asks Santi if she can ride her and he always shakes his head saying, "Amina is powerful and highly-strung, too much horse for a little Titch like you."

"I'm not little," Haya tries to argue.

But Santi is firm. "You can have a lesson on Dandy," he says.

Haya doesn't want Dandy. He is an ill-tempered Shetland gelding with short legs and a bushy mane. He is so little Haya can brush him without using the orange crate to stand on. He tries to bite her when she brushes his flank. He is not the horse for her.

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One day they visit Al Hummar, just Haya, Grace and Ali. Haya has been coming here every week since Mama died and now she is almost four. Santi is there at the gates as always to welcome them and takes Grace to his office and pours her a coffee while Ali pulls out a record to hand to Santi and Haya takes herself off to visit the horses.

Today she makes her way directly to the second courtyard to see Amina.

Amina's head is already poking out over the loose-box door, her dainty ears swivelling attentively at the sound of Haya's approaching footsteps. Santi has left the old orange crate beside Amina's box for her and Haya props it up against the door, climbing on top of it so that she is tall enough to see inside.

"Amina!"

The mare nickers in reply and nuzzles her. Haya usually feeds the horses with handfuls of alfalfa but today she has brought Amina something special. She digs into her pocket and pulls out three round white peppermints. Teetering on the orange crate, she extends her hand out flat with the offering and the mare eagerly snuffles her palm, nibbling daintily, brushing her skin with soft lips until all three



peppermints have vanished. Haya giggles as Amina's mouth works furiously, tasting the mints. The mare begins to jiggle her head up and down, her eyes going wide as she chews. Haya's tiny hands work the bolts on the loose-box door.

Haya climbs up the stable door and this time when she reaches the top rung she throws herself in the air! Amina sidesteps as she feels Haya's weight land on her back. She gives a snort as Haya begins to tap her with her heels, urging her on like the stone lions at Al Nadwa.

Amina is not cold like the stone lions; her body feels warm between Haya's bare legs. Haya taps again with her heels and pulls on the guide rope she has strung round Amina's neck and they set off up the driveway towards the main courtyard.

As they enter the courtyard, other horses stick their heads out over the stable doors to nicker the greetings. Amina is a confident mare and without a glance at the other horses she walks straight up to the fountain and shoves her muzzle deep into the cool trough. Up on her back, Haya is chatting away to the mare, swinging her legs back and forth as Amina snorts and flicks at the water.

Suddenly the door to Santi's office flies open. Grace is there, looking very anxious. "Haya!" she cries out. She is about to race towards the fountain when Santi grabs her arm.

"She's OK," Haya hears him say. "They have made it this far. The mare will not hurt her. Come back and finish your coffee and leave them both a while longer."

In the car on the way home Haya is no longer silent. She is full of her adventure, already making plans to ride Amina the next time she returns to Al Hummar.

"We shall see," Grace says, trying to be firm, but so relieved to see the Princess smiling and laughing that she does not say no.

That night, when Baba arrives home, Haya cannot wait to tell him.

"I rode Amina today," she says as she clambers into bed with Doll under her arm.

Her father raises an eyebrow in surprise. "Did you really?"

"Santi says I am a natural," Haya says proudly. And then she asks, "What is a natural?"

Baba smiles. "Horses are in your blood, Haya. For many generations the Bedouin have bred the best horses. The Arabians in our stables can be traced back to the first horses, the five mares of Al Khamseh."

Haya knows the Legend of Al Khamseh. Her father has told it to her lots of times before, but she wants it again. She lies back on the pillow and her father tucks the blankets tight around her before he begins.

"Two thousand years ago your ancestor, Mohammad, Peace Be Upon Him, wanted to create the perfect horse, one with the stamina, speed, courage and loyalty to carry him across the great desert. So he gathered together a hundred of his very best mares and set a test. For three long days he kept the horses under the hot desert sun, penned without food or drink to test their stamina. Then he released the mares, and let them gallop to the waterhole of a distant oasis.

"The mares galloped on, closer and closer to the oasis. Then, just when they had almost reached the water's edge, he raised his battle horn to his lips and blew, calling the mares back to him once more.

"Of the hundred mares, only five were courageous and loyal enough to turn round and return to his side. These mares became known as 'The Five'. Each of them was a different colour – a grey, a black, a roan, a chestnut and a bay. It is said that their noble blood is in the veins of every true Bedouin Arabian."

"Why was it only mares?" Haya asks. "Weren't there stallions too?"

"Oh, yes, there were a great many stallions," her father says. "But to the Bedouin it is the mothers who matter the most."

“Did Mohammad, Peace Be Upon Him, have a favourite mare?” Haya asks.

“They say that he loved the bay best of all,” her father replies.

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“Amina is a bay,” Haya says. She is quiet for a moment and then she asks, “Do camels have noble blood?”

Her father smiles again. “Camels are magnificent creatures. Without them, the Bedouin could not have conquered the great desert. But horses are bonded to us, deep in our hearts. In the desert, the Bedouin will leave his camels outside his tent, but his horse sleeps with him inside, kept safe by his bed.”

“I want to do that,” Haya says. “I wish Amina could come here and sleep in my bedroom with me.”

“I think Amina might prefer her loose box,” her father says. “And I don’t think Zuhair would be very pleased to see hoofprints on the carpets.”

The King tucks Haya in more tightly and strokes her hair. “Sleep well, my Bedouin Princess.”

That night, for the first time in ages, Haya does not cry. She lies back on her pillow and stares at the stars, imagining galloping on Amina. She can hear the battle horn and feel the surge of the mare’s speed, as she grips on tight with her legs, spurring Amina forward. Bare skin against silky fur, the coarse rope of the mare’s mane tangled in her hands and Amina’s wonderful, warm, sweet smell filling Haya’s senses as she drifts off to sleep.

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*Aqaba*

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One morning at breakfast Haya's father tells her that Grace is leaving.

"Grace's mother is very sick," the King explains, "and there is no one else to care for her. Grace needs to go home."

Grace's mother lives a long way from Amman so Grace cannot stay at the palace to look after Haya and Ali.

"Will the new nanny bake biscuits?" Haya asks Grace.

Grace smiles. "I am sure she will."

"But how will she know how I like them?" Haya asks.

Grace gives Haya a hug and wipes the tears off her hot little cheeks. "Perhaps she will make them differently," she tells Haya, "but I am sure you will like her biscuits too."

She cuddles Haya close. "Your new nanny will love you as much as I do," Grace whispers softly. "Wait and see."

\*

On the day that Grace goes away forever, the King takes Haya and Ali to the Summer House in Aqaba. They set off, just the three of them, in the blue sports car, all alone – except for the bodyguards who travel in two separate cars, one in front and one behind.

They honk and beep their way through the narrow streets of the market district where merchants hang their stalls with colourful rugs and scarves, and soon leave the creamy white apartment blocks of the city behind. Now there are clusters of houses amid bare hills, their flat rooftops trimmed with satellite dishes. Shaggy brown goats wander loose by the roads where camel herders live in tents constructed out of brightly coloured blankets, ignoring the motorways of traffic whizzing by them.

On the open highway horns blast and lorries thunder past the little sports car, but Haya's father is not flustered, weaving and zipping in between them. At one point he overtakes his bodyguards and Haya looks back through the rear window to see the two black Mercedes struggling to keep up as her father takes the bends at top speed.

The roads climb higher until they finally crest the ridge and see desert mountains stretching out to the horizon. The mountains are the colour of rust, but the soil beside the road is chalky pale and the only plants that grow here are thorn bushes.

Haya can feel her ears about to pop as they descend the mountain roads to a flat stretch of highway that goes all the way to Aqaba, where desert sand at last meets sea.

The Summer House is very simple compared to their palace, sunny and bright with a view over the sea and doors that open out on to the beach. Haya remembers summer days spent here, always in her swimming costume with her feet covered in sand.

The members of the King's Guard have arrived ahead of them to check that everything is as it should be, and the housekeeper and chef are preparing lunch. Haya and Ali just have time for a swim before the food is ready. It is a feast of ripe tomatoes and hummus and baba ghanoush and tabbouleh

and a dish called upside down, made with aubergines. Haya shows her father shells that she found on the beach after her swim. Her favourite is a white one shaped in a twist like an ice-cream cone.

In the afternoon, Haya takes Ali for a walk in the garden and holds him up to grasp the oranges that grow there and pluck them from the trees.

As she walks back into the kitchen with her arms full of oranges, Haya is about to call out for Mama, expecting her to be here waiting for her, just like she used to be. Then the words choke in her throat as she remembers all of a sudden and the oranges tumble to the floor.

On the drive home the next day Haya is silent. She stares out of the window while her father tells her about Frances. She will be Haya's new nanny and is arriving tomorrow.

"Frances will live with us just like Grace did," her father explains.

Haya has never had a new nanny. She keeps looking out of the window as her father tells her how wonderful Frances will be. Haya can taste her tears, salty like the waves at Aqaba.

\*

"There she is, Ali, you see?" Haya lifts her little brother up to the window so that he can see Frances getting out of her car and walking to the front door. "That's her," Haya tells him. "She's going to be really nice and love us like Grace did. Grace promised."

All Haya can see is the top of her head, the auburn hair twisted up into a sleekly groomed beehive. Frances is wearing a navy blue cotton piqué dress and the stiff pleats of her skirt stick out around her. As she walks up the front steps, the two stone lions on either side of the door don't move. *They wouldn't bother to eat you*, Haya thinks. Frances looks very bony, not enough meat for them.

The King is very lucky to have secured Frances's services at such short notice. Frances has, until recently, been in the service of a family in Zurich where she mixed with a very international set. She can speak English and French, *bien sûr*, and a little German, but not Arabic so do not even ask her to try. She has worked for the very best people, *the cream of society*. Haya knows this because she heard Frances telling Zuhair as she walks down the corridors of Al Nadwa, her sensible heels clacking on the marble floors.

Frances informs Zuhair that she is a governess which is altogether different to a nanny and he would please address her as Miss Ramsmead. She explains how she likes her tea: with milk, no lemon, no sugar. The tea itself needs to be brewed for exactly two minutes, no more, no less, and she would like a cup of it right now, please, brought up to her room.

Haya, who has been listening and watching from the upstairs landing, has to duck hastily into her bedroom as Frances breezes straight upstairs ahead of Zuhair.

After a quick glance round Grace's old room, she pronounces it "adequate" and tells Zuhair he must fetch her suitcases and the tea now.

Zuhair is not used to being spoken to in this manner. Even the Queen never spoke to him like this. But his face does not show a flicker of expression as he says, "Certainly, Miss Ramsmead," and heads downstairs to get her bags and explain to the kitchen staff the special requirements of the new governess.

Haya is staring at Frances while she rummages distractedly in her handbag, but suddenly her new governess stops and swivels her head round. The Princess ducks behind the door, but it is too late.

"Good afternoon. You must be Her Royal Highness Princess Haya?"

Haya stays hidden behind the door.

Frances sighs. "It is not good manners for a Princess to greet someone like this," she says. "The

correct thing would be to present yourself as I am doing now. I am Miss Ramsmead, but you may call me Frances if you wish.”

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She stands expectantly, waiting for Haya to emerge. When at last the Princess steps out on to the landing, Frances’s eyes widen as she takes in dirty shorts, T-shirt and bare feet.

“You look more like a pauper’s son than a King’s daughter,” she says.

Haya doesn’t like to wear dresses – they get in the way when you are playing. She likes to wear shorts, just like Ali. But she has long dark hair to her shoulders and no one else has ever mistaken her for a boy before.

Frances inspects her, looking her up and down, and Haya is suddenly aware that she has not brushed her hair today and she did not have anyone to give her a bath after returning from the trip to the summer house.

“Your previous nanny clearly wasn’t a suitable influence,” Frances says and Haya feels her cheeks go hot. It is the way Frances says it – like Haya is not standing right there in front of her, as if she cannot hear what Frances is saying!

“Is this your room?” Frances gestures over Haya’s shoulder. She walks straight past Haya and into her bedroom. Frances casts a glance around, and spies the photo of Haya and her mother on the dresser.

“I was an acquaintance of Queen Alia, did you know that?” she asks. She holds the picture frame in her hands and Haya has to control the urge to snatch it back from her.

“We met on more than one occasion in Europe,” Frances continues, still holding the picture. “Before you were born, before she married your father. I thought to myself, now there is a young girl from a good family who will go far. Your mother was the epitome of grace, so beautiful ...” As she says this, Frances’s eyes lock on Haya’s legs. She is staring at the grass-stained knees poking out of Haya’s shorts.

“My poor girl,” Frances tuts. “The state of you.” She takes a deep breath. “Don’t worry, things will change now that I am here.”

She looks at her watch. “Now what time do you usually begin your lessons?”

“Lessons?”

“Yes,” Frances says. “You know, your studies?”

Haya doesn’t understand. She is only five. Surely that is too young for anything except playing?

At that moment one of the kitchen staff turns up carrying a silver tray with a pot, cup and saucer and a jug of milk. “Tea, Miss Ramsmead,” he says.

Frances lifts the jug with great suspicion, feeling it in her hands. “This milk is warm?”

He nods vigorously. “Yes! Hot milk.”

Frances wrinkles her nose. “Tea requires cold milk,” she says. The kitchen boy stares blankly at the tray that he has set down on the table.

“Well?” Frances says. “Take it away and bring me cold milk.”

He rushes forward, grasps the milk jug and backs away nervously. Then he turns and dashes back down the stairs. Frances shakes her head as she watches him go and then looks back at Haya.

“I can see I will have my work cut out for me,” she says.

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## *The Treasure Box*

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**I**t doesn't take Haya long to figure out that Frances is two different people. There is Frances the Governess – all sour, thin-lipped and taut as piano wire. And then there is the other Frances, the one the King gets to see. Haya and Ali call her 'Happy Frances'.

Happy Frances will cheerfully play games and sing songs. She will sew the pink hat back on Dodo just like Haya has been begging her to do for days. Happy Frances reads proper bedtime stories instead of ones that last just one page.

If the King is in the room then Happy Frances fusses over Haya and smothers her with cuddles. But her arms are so bony and her hugs are stiff and awkward. All they do is make Haya miss Grace more than ever.

Haya never talks to Baba about how much she misses Grace, just as she never speaks about how much she aches every single day for her Mama.

One day, Haya hears noises in the upstairs bedrooms, and walks in to find Frances overseeing her staff as they work their way through room by room with three large cardboard boxes.

Haya watches in horror as Frances picks up one of Mama's silk scarves and flings it into a box.

"What are you doing?"

Frances does not turn to look at her. "Decluttering."

"Those are Mama's things!" Haya can feel her cheeks turning hot. "You leave them alone!"

Frances shakes her head. "This is a palace, not a shrine. If you were more considerate, you would see that your father needs to put the past aside and move on."

If Baba were here then Haya would run to him right now – but he is away in Aqaba and Frances has chosen her moment all too well. Haya has no choice but to stand by helplessly as she watches Frances sweep her mother's memory away as if it were so much house dust.

No more Mama. That is the rule now that Frances is here.

There is a hole. Haya can feel it inside her, an emptiness that overwhelms her. Into this void she pushes down all thoughts of Mama. Only she does this a little too well, pushes too far.

Now, if she tries to picture her Mama's face or the sound of her voice, she finds it harder and harder. She is losing her Mama all over again. This time it is like Haya is trying to grab at smoke with her fingers. She wants so badly to hold on to her memories and yet her eyes well with tears whenever anyone mentions her Mama. And so people stop talking about the Queen in front of the little Princess. Everyone stops talking about Mama. Everyone, that is, except for the one person who should.

Frances barely met Queen Alia, but she speaks of her with an air of absolute authority.

"*Your mother would never...*" Frances always begins her lectures with these words and very soon Haya can hear them coming before Frances even opens her mouth. *Your mother would never...* dress like a boy, laugh too loud, get dirty fingernails, stain her clothes, forget to brush her hair, play childish games, or – worst of all – waste time with smelly, filthy horses.

Frances is an expert on the King too. She says His Majesty would be so much happier if Haya would try to be more feminine. "Your mother had such noble manners, she was such a lady."

A lady? Is that what Baba wants Haya to be? He has never mentioned it, but Frances says it over and

over again, so Haya doesn't know any more. And she doesn't know how to tell her father about the dark empty place inside her that is getting bigger every day. When her Baba says, "You are very quiet, Haya, tell me what is wrong?" she finds that there are no words for her sadness and so she says, "It's nothing. I am fine."

Haya cannot voice her emotions, not even to Baba. But she has found a place to put them. They are kept inside her treasure box. The treasure box is made of gold. Well, not really: it is made of cardboard, a shoebox painted gold with magazine pictures stuck all over it. Kept safe inside, where no one else can see, Haya stores her most precious things: her memories of Mama and life before Frances came to the palace.

The box is her museum and Haya treats each item inside it with the utmost care. There is a pair of her Mama's sunglasses with tortoiseshell rims, huge and square like a TV set. Two tape cassettes by Abba and Gloria Gaynor – which she found with the glasses in the glove box of Mama's car after she died. A pink pebble from the beach at Aqaba and the pointy white ice-cream seashell, pressed flowers and wild blooms from the meadows near the Summer House, once soft and delicate, now brittle like parchment, tucked between the pages of a notebook. There are photographs too and empty bullet cartridges, made of cold metal, just like the ones that bounced off her father's medal.

Haya spends hours arranging everything from the treasure box on her bed and then packing it away again. The last item she puts in the box is an almost empty bottle of her mother's favourite perfume. Before she puts the bottle back she very carefully removes the stopper and dabs the tiniest amount on her wrist, just like her mother did. Then she closes her eyes and inhales deep breaths, until the scent overpowers all her other senses and the world disappears.

\*

Several weeks after Frances arrives, with great reluctance, the governess gives in to Haya's pleading and they make a visit to the Royal Stables.

As usual, Santi is there to greet them when the car pulls up at Al Hummar.

"Welcome back, Titch!" He smiles at Haya. "The horses have missed you!"

Santi invites them into his office, where the music is playing and the pot of cardamom coffee is bubbling.

He offers Frances a cup. She takes a sip and then screws up her thin lips in disgust, placing the cup promptly on the table. "I should like a tour of the grounds, Señor Lopez."

Santi is very proud of his stables. He has given many tours here; Sultans and Kings have come to visit. None of them were ever as critical as Frances. The governess inspects the horses in the same way that she ran her eyes over Haya the day they met. "They're a little underweight, aren't they?"

"They are Arabians," Santi replies. "The breed is much lighter in the frame than the horses you are accustomed to back home in England."

"I know my breeds, Señor Lopez," Frances says. "All the same, I should like to see them a little more filled out than this."

"I did not realise that you were such a horsewoman, Miss Ramsmead," Santi says, casting a glance at Haya.

"Oh, yes," Frances says. "In England I rode with The Quorn. Have you heard of it?"

Santi raises an eyebrow. "That is a very exclusive hunt," he says. Frances looks smug until he adds, "You must know my wife Ursula. She hunted with them for many years. I will ask if she remembers you ..."



“Oh,” Frances falters. “Please don’t bother. I never ... rode to hounds very often. Besides, it was such a long time ago I hardly think—”

---

Suddenly a muzzle thrusts over the door of the loose box beside Frances. She emits a piercing shriek and leaps forward, almost landing on top of Haya.

“It’s all right,” Santi says as he reaches out to stroke the bay mare who has popped her head over the door. “This is Amina. She is being friendly; she didn’t mean to scare you.”

“I wasn’t scared!” But Frances won’t step any closer to the mare.

“She’s got a rather coarse look about her for a pure-bred, hasn’t she?” Frances says, glaring at Amina’s flat nose and heavy jaw.

“Amina is Desert Born,” Santi says. “Her temperament is excellent and she was once a very good showjumper ...”

“Arabs don’t jump,” Frances says emphatically.

“That is what they say,” Santi agrees, “but some, like Amina, are very bold, confident jumpers ...”

“Yes, well, thank you, Señor Lopez,” Frances says flatly. “I think we’ll be leaving now.”

“But we only just got here!” Haya says.

“I think we’ve been here quite long enough,” Frances says. She walks back towards the car and Haya only just has enough time to snatch up a handful of alfalfa to feed to Amina.

“I wish you had tried to bite her,” Haya whispers. “She deserves it.”

Amina nickers. “I know,” Haya agrees with the mare. “I don’t think she does like you. And I don’t think she likes me either.”

“Stay for lunch!” Santi implores as Frances ushers Haya into the car. “Ursula can bring food up from the house for us.”

“No, thank you.”

“Well then, leave Titch here for the afternoon. She loves the horses and my grooms will keep a close eye on her.”

“The grooms? She’s not a horse!” Frances replies. “Thank you for the tour, Señor Lopez.”

The car trip home is awful. “Those horses are ill-mannered brutes!” Frances proclaims. “Small wonder with Señor Lopez in charge! The dust and the dung in those yards ...”

“I like it there.” Haya juts her jaw out bravely. What is wrong with dung anyway? To say there is dung in a horse yard is like saying there is sand in the desert.

The rest of the journey home is spent in silence. But the next day, when Haya asks to go to the stables, Frances says she can’t. She has a piano lesson instead. And the piano lesson is followed by French and then ballet. There is no time for the stables.

\*

“Baba? I don’t feel so good.”

The King puts down his newspaper and looks at his daughter. Haya’s face is flushed and she has hardly touched her breakfast.

“You haven’t got a fever,” the King says as he feels her forehead.

“Maybe I am coming down with something?” Haya says hopefully.

“Maybe.” Her father looks at her knowingly.

“Frances?” The King summons the governess. “Princess Haya will be coming with me today.”

Haya packs her colouring-in pencils and waits with Doll at the front door as the driver brings the car round. She tries not to look too happy or too healthy as she gets in the back seat beside her father. The

car cruises out of the gates and up the winding roads of the palace compound to the Royal Court.

~~“Welcome, Your Royal Highness!”~~ The women who run the office are always pleased to see her. Her father’s secretary brings the King his morning coffee and also some orange juice and crackers for Haya, with a stack of paper and more coloured pens. In the corner of the office Haya makes herself comfortable out of sofa cushions and lies on the rug, drawing pictures of horses while her father talks on the phone and looks at the important papers on his desk.

She is very quiet when the King’s ministers come for a meeting at the large polished-oak table in the corner of the room. Haya focuses hard on her colouring-in, but she hears them, their voices deep and serious as they discuss Egypt and Israel and a place called Camp David. After the men are gone the King asks his secretary for more orange juice and chocolate biscuits. Then he takes off his shoes and climbs inside Haya’s sofa-cushion fortress.

“Haya, are you feeling better now?”

“Yes, Baba.”

“You are very quiet. Why don’t you tell me what is wrong?”

Haya hesitates. She doesn’t want to bother her father. He is a King with the weight of a nation on his shoulders.

“It’s OK,” her father says, “you can tell me.”

“Frances won’t take me to see the horses,” Haya says. “I keep asking, but she always says no.”

A misunderstanding. That is what Happy Frances calls it. Of course she is more than happy to escort the Princess to Al Hummar if that is what she wishes.

Haya is triumphant as they drive to the stables. Frances, meanwhile, has a face like poison. When they arrive, she refuses Santi’s offer of coffee and returns to sit in the car while Haya visits the horses.

For two hours Frances just sits there, reading a romance novel. On the car trip home Frances stuffs the book in her handbag, but she still doesn’t speak to Haya.

For the next fortnight visits to Al Hummar continue in this way. And then, one afternoon, the driver arrives at the front door of the palace to transport them to the stables and Haya notices that Frances isn’t holding her handbag.

“Señor Lopez and I have had words,” Frances says, and Haya is filled with despair until she adds, “he has agreed that there is no need for me to accompany you to the stables. It is more sensible for him to take care of you in the afternoons.”

As Haya travels to the stables, she feels electrified with a sense of freedom. Frances has finally admitted defeat. Haya is going to Al Hummar stables on her own!

There are fifty horses to care for and a half-dozen grooms under Santi’s command, but he is never too busy to spend time with Haya and is always waiting at the gates to greet her.

“I hope you are feeling strong, Titch,” he says. “There is much work to do.”

At the yards Yusef, the head groom, finds a pitchfork that is small enough for Haya’s little hands and she follows along behind the two men to help with the chores. There are boxes to be mucked out first. She digs out the damp straw with her pitchfork and helps to throw down fresh bedding into the stalls. Then she fills the hayracks in each box with armfuls of lush green alfalfa.

In the boiling room she helps the groom, Radi, to stir the barley pot, a huge cast-iron cauldron strung up by metal chains on a hook over the fire. She is not allowed to touch the pot because it is very hot, but Radi lets her scoop up dry barley and add it to the water. Barley must boil for at least two hours, but Radi likes it to boil overnight. The horses, he says, have delicate bellies.

In the tack room, Haya has her own named hook and a little bag of grooming brushes that Santi has made up for her: a hoof pick, a mane comb, a dandy brush and a curry comb. She takes her kit and

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