

Thunderhead

MARY O'HARA
W.N.U. FEATURES

THE STORY THIS FAR: In a cold rainstorm, Flicka's colt, long overdue, is born. Ken McLaughlin, Flicka's 12-year-old owner, finds her in a quick. With the assistance of his brother Howard he brings the mare and colt to the stables. To Ken's astonishment, the foal is white. It is evidently a throwback to the Albino, a wild white stallion that is Flicka's grand sire. This horse had stolen Gypsy from the Goose Bar ranch, the big horse farm owned by Ken's father in the Wyoming mountains. Her colts, while splendid physically, were all unmanageable. Ken is worried when he realizes that the Albino's characteristics have cropped out in his colt. He waits for a favorable time to announce his big news.

CHAPTER III

But the foal! That all-conquering propensity Rob McLaughlin had spoken of! After all the trouble Rob had taken to rid his stock of the hated blood of the Albino, here it was cropping out again. This foal was unlike its dam, unlike its sire, unlike any horse on the Goose Bar ranch. It resembled only one—the Albino. It was almost like having the Albino right there in the stall. Was the power and ferocity of the great outlaw enclosed within that mottled baby hide of pink and white? This thought made shivers go through Ken.

Flicka had finished her mash. Ken lifted the bucket down and went to the door of the barn. He swung the top half open and looked out. It had stopped snowing. The wind had reversed itself and had blown the storm back into the east whence it had come. There was a riot of scudding clouds in the sky with big stars close and bright, going in and out between them. It was much warmer.

Ken folded his arms on the bottom half of the Dutch door and leaned there thinking. There were still other shadow-shapes woven into the aura that encircled the foal like the predictions of a fortune-teller.

That word Rob McLaughlin had dropped so casually into Ken's thought stream that day—race horse—

Race horse. It could not, of course, be Flicka, owing to the thickened tendon which was the result of her infection. But why not a colt of Flicka's? With a sweet and tractable mother to teach him manners, with the power and speed which came down to every one of the Albino's line—why not? It had been Nell who had first made this suggestion. Since then it had not been out of Ken's mind.

Ken turned from the barn door and ran his hand down that right hind leg of Flicka's. It was his fault—that thickened tendon—because he had made them catch her for him.

"But you're not sorry, are you, Flicka?" he whispered, going to her head, "because now you've got me—"

Her face, leaning against him, was very still and contented.

Ken took the lantern, gave one last look backward, and then left the barn, closing the door tightly behind him. He ran down through the gorge.

In front of the rambling stone ranch house were several acres of lawn, called by his mother, the Green, after the neat little village Greens of New England where she had spent her childhood. It was covered with a thin sheet of snow. Ken ran across it to the house, and, in the warm kitchen, took off his slicker and sou'wester and drank the hot chocolate Howard had made.

While they sat drinking, the two boys engaged in one of the wrangling, incomprehensible and wholly oblique discussions which make adult listeners conclude that the constitution of boys' minds, and their language, have nothing to do with reason, logic or natural facts.

"Promise!"
"Let go of me!"
"But he's mine."
"My tongue's not yours."
"Prom—Ken's voice rose."
"Sh—sh—sh—" warned Howard.
But Ken was conscious of being in the right. If his father heard the noise and discovered it was because Howard wouldn't promise not to tell about Ken's colt before he had a chance to, Howard would get it in the neck.

"Promise. Promise! PROMISE!"
"All right, I promise. Get off my back."
Bound for the stables and the colt, they passed behind the house at the sight of two strange cars. Visitors. Visitors brought home to the ranch from the dinner party last night. They recognized the cars. The blue one belonged to Colonel Morton Harris, an old classmate of their father's at West Point, now Colonel of Artillery at Fort Francis Warren. The gray one belonged to Charles Sargent, millionaire horse-breeder, owner of the famous racing stud, Appalochian. Sargent had his home ranch not twenty-five miles from the Goose Bar.

"Charley Sargent and Mort Harris," said Howard airily. "That's keen. No church today."
But Ken stood looking at the cars and thinking. Charley Sargent, tall and thin as a beanpole in his narrow Cheyenne pants—always kidding and clowning—his long brown face under the wide-brimmed western hat looking as Gary Cooper's might when he got older—it was always fun when Charley Sargent came to visit, and he might talk about his race horses. Ken's heart felt a little

flutter of excitement. He wanted to know all he could find out about race horses. And Appalochian, the big black racing stud—he—
"Come on!" said Howard, heading for the barn.

Ken walked slowly after him, wondering if the presence of visitors would interfere with his own surprise. Should he tell them at breakfast? It had to be arranged so that the impression was favorable. They had to be glad and proud that it was white, as he was himself. That wasn't all. He had really to act so that no one, not even his father, would suspect that he was hiding anything. That was going to be hard. It was hard enough to keep any sort of secret—harder still if you felt the least bit guilty about it.

When they reached the corral they saw that Flicka and the colt were both out, enjoying the early morning sunshine. Gus and Tim were watching, astonished and amused.

Ken rushed at Gus and grabbed him. "Don't tell anyone, Gus—they don't know yet. I want to s'prise 'em—promise—"

"You cud knock me over with a feather, Kenzie," said the old Swede, with his slow smile. "But white horses is gude luck, they say."

"Never seen no such colt on this ranch before," added Tim. "What'll the Captain say?"

"Don't tell him until I have a chance to," insisted Ken. "Promise, will you?"

"Sure. You can tell 'em, Kenzie," said Gus. "She's your mare, and your colt too, I guess."

Ken opened the barn door and called Flicka in. The colt did not follow but stood blinking in the sunshine. Gus and Tim shooed it gently in. Ken put them both in the farthest stall and he and Howard stood for a while watching them.

But Ken had important business on his mind, and presently ran down to the house and found that his mother was making breakfast and his father upstairs shaving.

Ken leaned against the bathroom door and called gently, "Dad!"
"Hullo there!"
"Say, dad—would you tell me something?"
"Depends."
"Well—if you had money enough, what kind of fences would you have on the ranch?"

"Well—if I had money enough, I'd tear out every foot of barbed wire and put in wooden fences. Good solid posts about ten feet apart and four feet high. Even one line of rails on top of that would keep horses in—that is, if it was solid enough so they couldn't rub them down with their fannies."

"Would it cost much, dad?"
"You can get the poles for nothing in the Government Reserve, but the cutting and hauling would cost money—that's work. I wouldn't have time to do it myself."

"Even if it costs lots of money, dad, it wouldn't matter."
Rob's answer was smothered in the sounds that go with shaving, and suddenly he began his favorite shaving song.

Suddenly the door burst open and he strode out in riding breeches, boots, singlet, and a very gay good humor. His black hair was rough, his eyes very blue, and all his big white teeth showing. He almost rode over Ken and the boy felt overpowered by the impact of his father's personality. With the door closed between them, it had been less potent.

"I'll be waiting for you a-hat the kitchen door!" roared Rob, stamping down the hall toward his room. He stopped at the head of the stairs, looked over and shouted, "Say, you fellows! Mort! Charley! Are you still asleep? Flapjacks comin' up!"

There was an answering shout from the terrace at the front of the house, "We're way ahead of you!"

and Rob hurried into his room to finish dressing.

Outside, Nell and her two guests were being entertained, as was usual at the Goose Bar ranch, by the antics of assorted animals. Chaps, the black cocker, and Kim, the collie, were chasing each other on the Green as if nothing were needed for exuberant happiness but to have been shut up for a night and then let out again.

All traces of snow had disappeared. There was intense sunlight breaking everywhere into the colors of the prism. There was a boisterous wind bending the pines and making Nell's blue linen dress flutter.

"What do you think of him?" she called to Colonel Harris, who stood near the fountain inspecting Rob's work team. They were huge brown brutes. "That one you're looking at is Big Joe," she added, "the pride of Rob's heart."

"I should say," said the Colonel in his cultured, precise manner, taking off his glasses and polishing them, "that he is a pure-bred Percheron, sixteen hands high, and weighs thirteen hundred pounds."

"Just about right," said Nell, picking up her cat, Pauly, who was begging beside her. Pauly, a simous, tortoiseshell angora with long topaz eyes, and a little siren face, slipped one arm around Nell's neck, hung on, and tried to lick her mouth.

Nell tapped the tiny coral sickle-shaped tongue and laughed.

Charley Sargent's lanky form hovered over her. "You're lookin' mighty pretty this mornin'—how do you get those pink cheeks?"

"You forget I've been slaving over the kitchen stove getting breakfast for—let's see—five male men—"

She buried her face in Pauly's soft brown fur. Charley Sargent always embarrassed her with his flattering eyes and flirty ways. He made her feel about eighteen.

"Isn't this a day!" she exclaimed. "Who could believe it was snowing last night! That's Wyoming for you!" She turned her face up to the sky. There were magpies and plover and chicken hawks gliding on steeply tilted wings against the blue, and now and then, when the wind veered, came a breath of snow from the Neversummer Range in the south.

"Last night," said Charley, still hovering, "was a mighty nice party. But I'm afraid to face Rob. He bawled me out for dancin' with you so much."

"This other one," called Colonel Harris, "is not pure-bred, is he?"
"No," said Nell, running down the steps to join him. "That's old Tommy. He's our bronco-buster. Whenever Rob has a young horse he wants to take the ginger out of, he harnesses him up with Tommy."

While she chattered she was remembering how furious Rob had been last night when Charley Sargent had waltzed with her and spun her around and around so fast that her long blue dress had stood out like the skirt of a whirling dervish. All the same—it was fun.

Breakfast was noisy. There were flapjacks, thin and brown and light with slightly crisp edges. Piles of them, piping hot. A bowl of brown sugar was on the table and a jug of maple syrup. With her flapjacks, Nell liked marmalade, melted and thinned and hot.

"By Jiminy, I'll try that!" exclaimed Charley, taking the pitcher. All the time, the thought of his colt was never out of Ken's mind. Even while he was watching and listening to the others, he was trying to figure out just how he would tell it. The build-up he had attempted with his father hadn't come to much. Ken wanted, too, to talk to his mother about the things she would like to buy when his colt was winning money on the race tracks. Dresses and velvet things with fur like the General's wife wore, so that they would all fall in love with the colt the moment they saw it because of all it was going to do for them.

But as the hilarious breakfast progressed through grapefruit and flapjacks and sausages and pots of coffee with thick yellow Guernsey cream, and Rob got up again and again to go to the kitchen, and Howard carried piles of plates in and out, Ken became convinced that this wasn't the time to tell it. They wouldn't pay attention—would just say, "Oh, a new colt? Flicka has foaled at last? Fine—pass the syrup, will you?" After all, there were so many colts born on the Goose Bar ranch.

A car drove up and stopped behind the house. As Rob returned from the kitchen, Colonel Harris said, "That's probably the sergeant and orderly with my mare."

"What for?" asked Nell.

Rob explained. "Mort wants to have his saddle mare bred by Banner, so I told him to send her up today."

"It's late for breeding, isn't it?"
"Yes," said Harris, "it is. I thought she was bred, but she isn't after all, so we're going to try again."

"Why don't you have her bred by a real stud!" said Charley. "You don't happen to be ignorant of the fact that my Appalochian is the finest racin' stud in horse history, do you?"

(TO BE CONTINUED)

IMPROVED UNIFORM INTERNATIONAL SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON

By HAROLD L. LUNDQUIST, D. D., Of the Moody Bible Institute of Chicago. Released by Western Newspaper Union.

Lesson for June 17

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THE CHURCH BEGINS ITS WORK

LESSON TEXT—Acts 2:36-38, 38-40, 41. GOLDEN TEXT—Ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.—Acts 1:8.

The church of Jesus Christ, glorious in spite of her failings, is the greatest institution known to this world. That is true because while it is in this world, the church is not of the world, but of God. He established the church as the fellowship of believers to do His work in the world. For more than 19 centuries the Christian church has served Him with varying degrees of consecration and usefulness.

The beginning of the work of the church is of special interest, for such a study will show whether we today are following in the right path. We find in our lesson that the early church was distinguished by: I. Obedience to God (vv. 29-32).

The disciples filled with the Holy Spirit were bold in declaring the gospel and in proclaiming their risen Lord. Realizing that the apostles' message was winning the people, the leaders of the Jews admonished them not to speak in the name of Christ (Acts 4:18). When they continued, the priests threw them into prison, but an angel set them free (Acts 5:19).

When they were again apprehended and accused of disobeying the command of the high priest, Peter and the others responded by pointing out that they were under a higher command, that of God Himself. Him they would obey, come what may.

Who will deny that we need a renewal of that spirit in the church today? We need to lose our fear of men and their little authority, and regain a larger measure of obedience to God.

II. A Convicting Message (v. 33). When God's Word is preached with complete obedience to Him, something is sure to happen. Men and women will be convicted of their sin. They will be cut to the heart.

That conviction will show itself in one of two ways. Some will be repentant and will cry out with the jailer at Philippi, "What must I do to be saved?" (Acts 16:30). Turning to Christ, they will find deliverance from sin.

Others will harden themselves in their wicked ways and become even more bitter in their hatred of Christ and the church. In our lesson we find them taking counsel to kill the disciples. Knowing themselves to be wrong and seeing that God's work revealed their sin, but not being willing to give it up, they tried to destroy the witness against them.

We see that same spirit operative today. To be sure, it does not usually show itself in such crude action as physical killing, although the day when that may happen again may not be far away.

In our cultivated time, it is revealed in a scholarly attack upon God's Word, an undermining of the faith of our young people in schools or colleges, or a ridiculing of those who wish to live a separated, consecrated life.

III. No Compromise (vv. 34, 35, 38-40). A wise man, Gamaliel, presented what we would now call a program of appeasement. He urged that they wait and see what would happen.

At first glance his idea seems to be most commendable, and of course it did save the lives of the disciples at the moment. But it was essentially a "do-nothing" policy of compromise. If he believed in what the disciples were doing, he should have come out boldly on their side.

Notice that the believers had no part in this scheme. They listened, but did not give assent. They took the beating and went right out and preached the gospel again. What a fine example for us to follow! Those who are alert to the real problems of the church today recognize that the willingness to compromise with the world, the flesh, and (so it seems at times) the devil himself for the sake of peace, is destroying the real ministry of the church.

IV. Absolute Fearlessness (vv. 40, 42). The early church was a very small group of believers with no position of influence or power in the world. Humanly speaking, it would have been expedient for them to heed the admonition now twice given (compare Acts 4:18) and confine their testimony to a private witness.

But they had hearts which were aflame with the fire of God, a commission to take the good news of God's saving grace to all men, and the assurance of God's presence (see Matt. 28:19, 20, Acts 1:8), and they were absolutely fearless.

The world admires true courage not only on the battlefield, but in the pulpit.

The criticism which men in the armed services make of the church centers at this point, namely, that the church has been too timid about giving out the Word of God, about really believing and practicing it.



AND JUST IN TIME, TOO

Throw away the towing-station phone! Kiss those upholstery squirrels and moths good-bye! Forget about that wire you've been saving to hold the fenders and doorknobs in place!

The automobile is coming back!

WPB and the automobile manufacturers announce that 200,000 new cars will be made between now and January 1, with another 400,000 following in the first three months of 1946. Before many months you may actually see automobiles in this country with one-piece windshields, hubcaps on all four wheels and no mice-holes in the cushions.

Few things will lift the spirit of Americans more than the prospect of a return to the days when glistening paint jobs, eye-blinding gadgets and different shaped bodies were as routine as the first robin.

The bitterness of war hit many countries in many ways, but most Americans first awoke to its terrors when they looked into auto sales-room windows and found nothing there but the potted palm and the dusty draperies.

It has now been three or four years since the American home has answered a phone and found somebody on the other end saying "How about coming over and giving you a ride in our demonstrator?"

And there are people in this country who can hardly remember those sweet words: "We'll allow you \$800 on the old six and leave the new eight at your door."

This country never really knew how good its automobiles were until it had to make them last through a tough war. It made the amazing discovery that the industry had turned out machines that would run without oil, gas, tires, radiators, live batteries or intact pistons.

All over America cars have been in operation in defiance of the laws of engineering, gravitation, public safety, sanitation and rubbish collection.

And the condition of the pleasure cars has been somewhat outdone by the shapes the trucks were in. There have been trucks on our roads that needed only proper tags to make them museum pieces and collectors' items.

They operated on the two-trips-for-one plan; one trip as scheduled and another trip back over the route to pick up lost parts.

But relief is at hand. The Post-Hitler Boiler is just around the corner. The Japs are tough, but we can lick them with one hand on the steering gear.

RED POINTS WITH YOUR RESTAURANT MEALS

("It has been suggested that restaurant patrons give red points for meat orders.")—News item.

Customer—How about a tenderloin?
Waiter—We have a very good 40 point tenderloin with french fries, or a nice 38-point T-bone with onions.

Customer—Are you kidding about this point stuff?
Waiter—No, sir. If you want meat in restaurants you gotta have red points.

Customer—If I had any red points I would eat at home.
Waiter—How about some nice halibut?
Customer—I didn't come in here for halibut.

Waiter—My dear fellow, what you come into a restaurant for these days is of no importance. We have some very good fried clams.

Customer—We digress. Do I get a steak or not?
Waiter—Do I get coupons or not?
Customer—You are not entitled to coupons.

Waiter—Who told you that?
Customer—Huffnagel, Apse, Hoffman, Bernstein, Burnett and Cribbs—my lawyers.

Waiter—I've been advised otherwise by Bowles, Packer, Slaughter and Chef—they're my lawyers!
Customer—Oh, well, it looks like a dead heat. Can't we compromise?
Waiter—How?
Customer—I'll give you half the points required if you'd give me half the steak that's represented on the menu.

Waiter—That's easy. And I'll throw in a glass of water, too.

Among the screwy proposals by various groups at the San Francisco conference is one to require five bases in baseball. The backers of the idea are satisfied that to preserve peace in the world of tomorrow places will be required for at least two good shortstops on the diamond.

On the other hand the demand for five bases may reflect a conviction, held by Private Furkey, that in the world situation for the next few years there will be more runners on bases than there are bases.

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HOUSEHOLD HINTS

Do not allow your vacuum cleaner bag to become filled with dirt before you empty it. It should be emptied frequently so as not to interfere with the flow of air.

If brown sugar becomes lumpy, place a damp cloth in the jar with the sugar and cover it tightly.

Don't be annoyed by a food chopper that won't stay firmly anchored to the table. Put a piece of sandpaper, gritty side up, on the table before screwing the chopper in place above it.

Boil a cracked dish for about three-quarters of an hour in enough sweet milk to cover it. The crack in the dish will become almost invisible.

Place a small hand brush, bristle side up, in the soap dish. Keep the soap on top of the brush and when you need to use the brush it will already be full of soap.

Two spoons nailed to the wall about two inches apart makes a good place to hang the broom (upside down).

An old turkish towel is good for removing dust from upholstered furniture. Wet the towel, wring it dry, and spread over piece to be cleaned. Beat with a broomstick. Escaping dust clings to the towel.

Uncle Phil Says:

GIVE an hour to your Victory garden and nature gives twenty-four.

A clever man doesn't go far to find that which is near.

We scoff at the past and don't want to live in it. But we don't think the present is so hot either.

Neither an egg nor an ego is good till you break it.

After you have lost everything else, you still have the experience.

One does not get lost on a straight road.

VERONICA LAKE

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