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BLACK BEAUTY

ANNA SEWELL



BLACK BEAUTY

'What more could I want?' says Black Beauty, as he describes his pleasant home and his kind owners. 'Freedom! For the first four years of my life I had a large field where I could gallop around at full speed – with no straps, no bit, and no blinkers. Now I stood in a stable, night and day, except when I was wanted for work.'

In the 1870s there was plenty of work for horses – pulling carriages and cabs and carts through crowded cities, along country roads, in all kinds of weather.

Black Beauty has been well trained. He knows that he must never bite or kick or run away, and must always do what he is told, however tired or hungry he feels. He always behaves well, but when he is sold, first to one owner, then another, and another, he learns how hard a horse's life can be, and how stupid and how cruel some people are . . .





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Human Interest

Black Beauty

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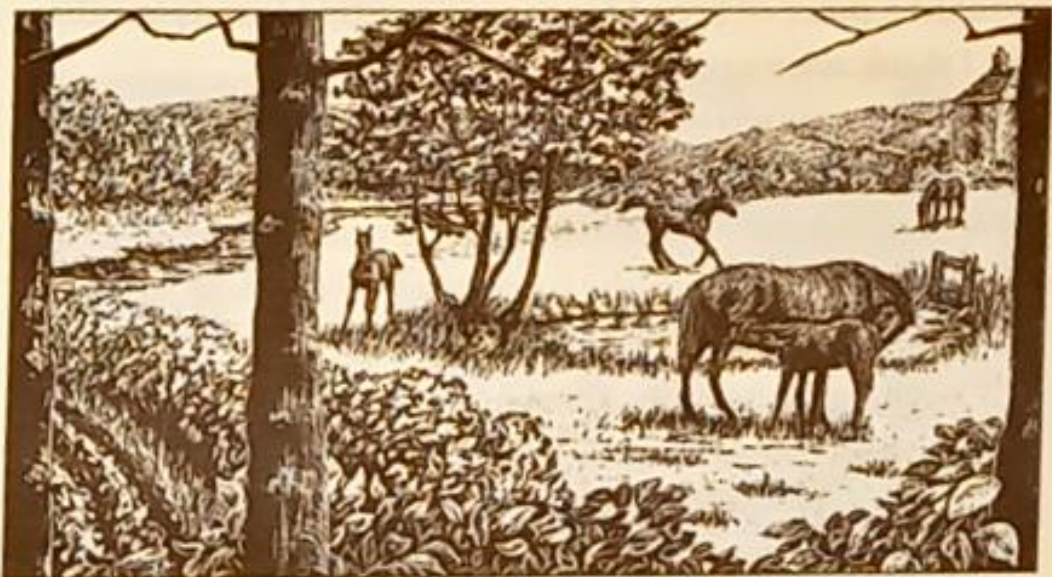
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My first home

The first place I can remember well was a pleasant field with a pond of clear water in it. Trees made shadows over the pond, and water plants grew at the deep end. On one side was another field, and on the other side we looked over a gate at our master's house, which stood by the roadside. At the top of our field were more tall trees, and at the bottom was a fast-running stream.

While I was young, I lived on my mother's milk, but as soon as I was old enough to eat grass, my mother went out to work during the day and came back in the evening.

There were six other young horses in the field, although they were older than I was. We all galloped together round



The first place I remember was a pleasant field.

the field, and had great fun. But sometimes the others would kick and bite.

'They are young farm horses and haven't learned how to behave,' my mother told me. 'You are different. Your father is well known, and your grandfather twice won the most important race at Newmarket. Your grandmother was quiet and gentle, and you have never seen me kick or bite, have you? I hope you will grow up to be gentle and a willing worker, and never bite or kick.'

I have never forgotten my mother's advice. She was a clever and sensible old horse. Her name was Duchess, but our master often called her Pet. He was a good, kind man, and my mother loved him very much. Whenever she saw him at the gate, she trotted across. He used to pat her and say, 'Well, old Pet, and how is your little Darkie?' I was a dull black colour, so he called me Darkie. He sometimes brought a piece of bread for me, or a carrot for my mother, and I think we were his favourites.

When I was two years old, something happened which I have never forgotten. It was early spring, and there was a light mist over the trees and fields. I and the other young horses were feeding at the lower end of the field when we heard the distant cry of dogs.

The oldest among us lifted his head to listen. 'There are the hounds!' he said, and immediately raced off. The rest of us followed him to the top of the field, where we could see several fields beyond.

My mother and another old horse were standing near.

'They've found a hare,' said my mother, 'and if they come this way, we shall see the hunt.'

Soon the dogs were all racing down the field next to ours, making a loud 'yo-yo-yo-yo!' sound at the top of their voices. After them came men on horses, some in green coats, and all galloping as fast as they could. Suddenly, the dogs became silent and ran around with their noses to the ground.

'They've lost the smell of the hare,' said the old horse. 'Perhaps it will escape.'

But the dogs began their 'yo-yo-yo-yo!' again and came at full speed towards our field. Just then a hare, wild with fear, ran towards the trees. The dogs jumped over the stream and ran across the field, followed by the huntsmen. Six or eight jumped their horses over the stream, close behind the dogs. Before the hare could get away, the dogs were upon her with wild cries.



A hare, wild with fear, ran towards the trees.