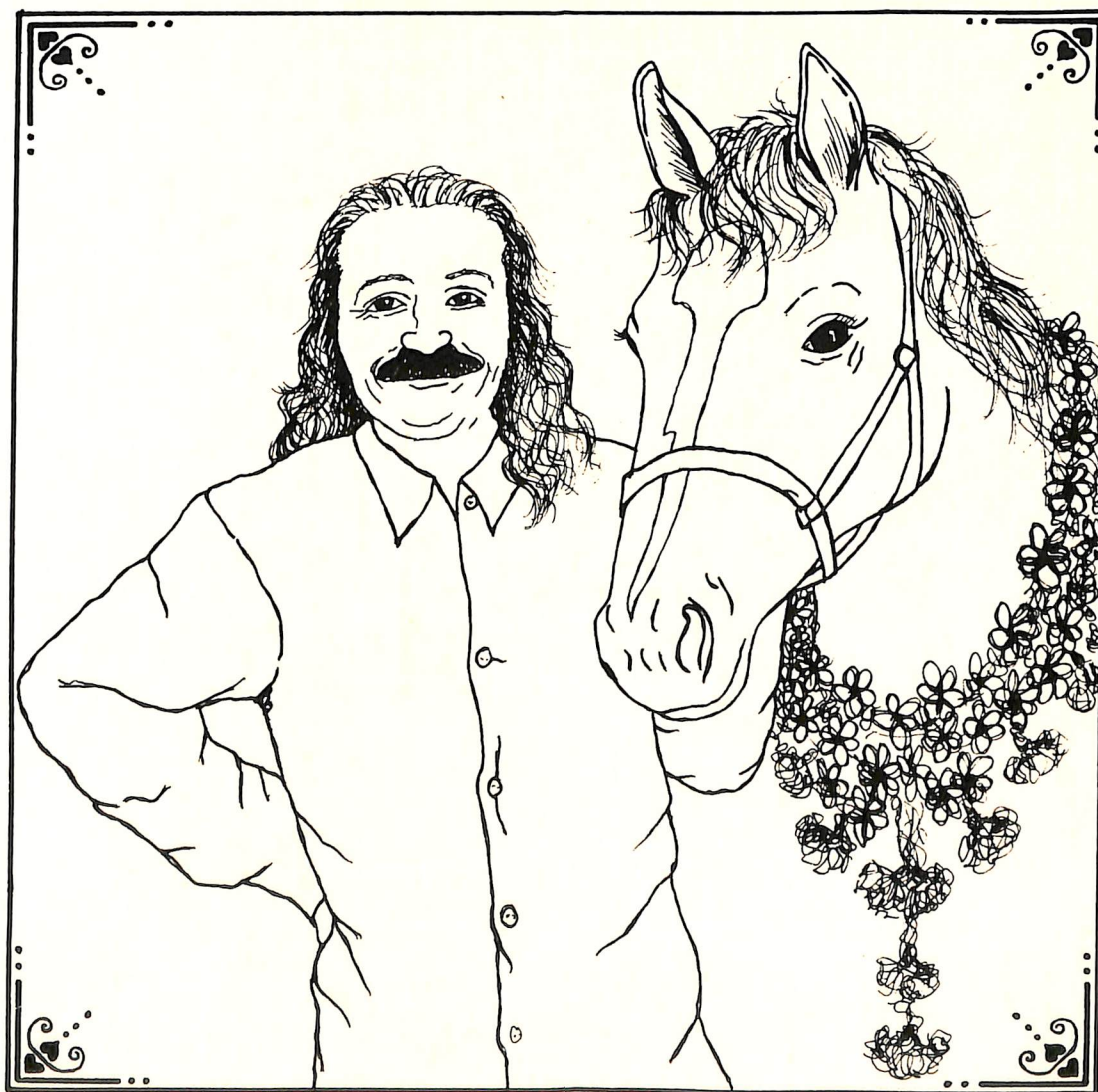


SHEEBA



Text by Malinda Mayer
Illustrations by Jill Vowles

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This book is lovingly dedicated to Mehera,
who told us these stories,
and to her most dearly beloved,
Meher Baba.

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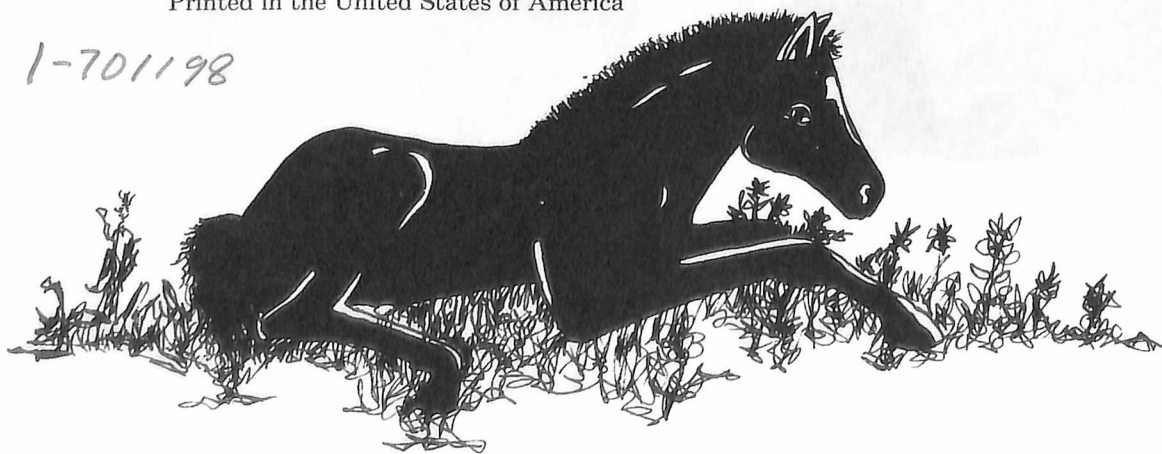
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Sheeba's Story Begins



The stories in this book are about a very special horse named Sheeba. You may wonder, "What was so special about her?"

First of all, Sheeba was special because she was a very beautiful horse. She had a red-brown, or chestnut, coat, a gold mane, and a white star on her forehead. She was also special because she was a thoroughbred horse. She came from a family of horses that were bred and trained to run fast and win races. But what made Sheeba an extra special horse was that her master was the greatest Master of all — Meher Baba.

Meher Baba was the Avatar of our age, God in human form. Baba was the perfect father and mother, friend and teacher. For most of his life he didn't say a single word out loud, but the people who lived with him understood him by the expressions on his face and the way he moved his hands.

Most of all, people heard Meher Baba, and still do hear him, speaking in their hearts. He was so full of love for all creation that everything and everyone who came to him felt that he was not silent at all.

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Animals were very important in his work of loving and helping the world. He kept many different kinds of creatures for pets, and he was loving and kind to each one as an individual soul. Any animal that had the chance to live with Baba and receive his love directly was a very special animal indeed.

Sheeba's life with Baba began in 1953, in a city in India called Dehra Dun. Baba had come from his home in Meherazad to live for a short time in Dehra Dun. The men and women who came with him and cared for him were known as Baba's "mandali." In their language, "mandali" means "companion."

But Baba's mandali were more than just companions. They knew Baba was God in human form. They loved him deeply and helped him in his work. Because they loved Baba so much, they always tried to do whatever he asked of them. The dearest wish of each man and woman who loved Baba was to please Baba and make him happy.

This was sometimes very difficult to do, and the mandali often had to work hard to do their best. But even when they made mistakes or forgot to do as they were told, Baba loved their attempts to please him. He always comforted them when they were sad and teased them when they were grouchy.

There were about twelve men mandali who came to Dehra Dun with Baba, including Dr. Nilu, Pendu, Baidul, Aloha, Dr. Donkin, and Eruch. Among the six women mandali who came along were Mehera, Mani, Naja, and Dr. Goher. The women mandali stayed in a different house than the men, a short distance away and up a hill.

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Near Dehra Dun lived a man named Kumar who loved Baba with all his heart. Kumar wanted to bring Baba a special gift. He thought long and hard about what he could give Baba. Then one day, as he was looking around, he noticed his new baby horse. "That's what I can give Baba!" he said. "I will give him Sheeba!"

And that was how Sheeba came to live with Baba and his mandali, and all her adventures began.

Sheeba Runs Away

Sheeba was only three months old when Kumar brought her to Baba. Baba was delighted to see Sheeba. He stroked her mane and patted her side and smiled a big, happy smile at both Sheeba and Kumar.

Baba knew that Mehera loved horses. He decided that Mehera would be the best person to take care of Sheeba for him. He told the men that they would all walk up the hill to the women's house and bring Sheeba to Mehera.

While Baba was preparing to walk up to the women's house, he told some of the men to go ahead of him with the little horse. He wanted them to be there with Sheeba when he arrived.

Baba took the end of the rope that was tied around Sheeba's neck and put it into Nilu's hand so that he could lead her up the hill. Nilu was excited that Baba had given him the privilege of leading the baby horse, and he set off cheerfully at a jaunty pace.

But Nilu was used to taking care of chickens and mules, not horses, so he did not hold the rope as tightly as he should have. Sheeba felt the loose rope and knew that meant she could run.

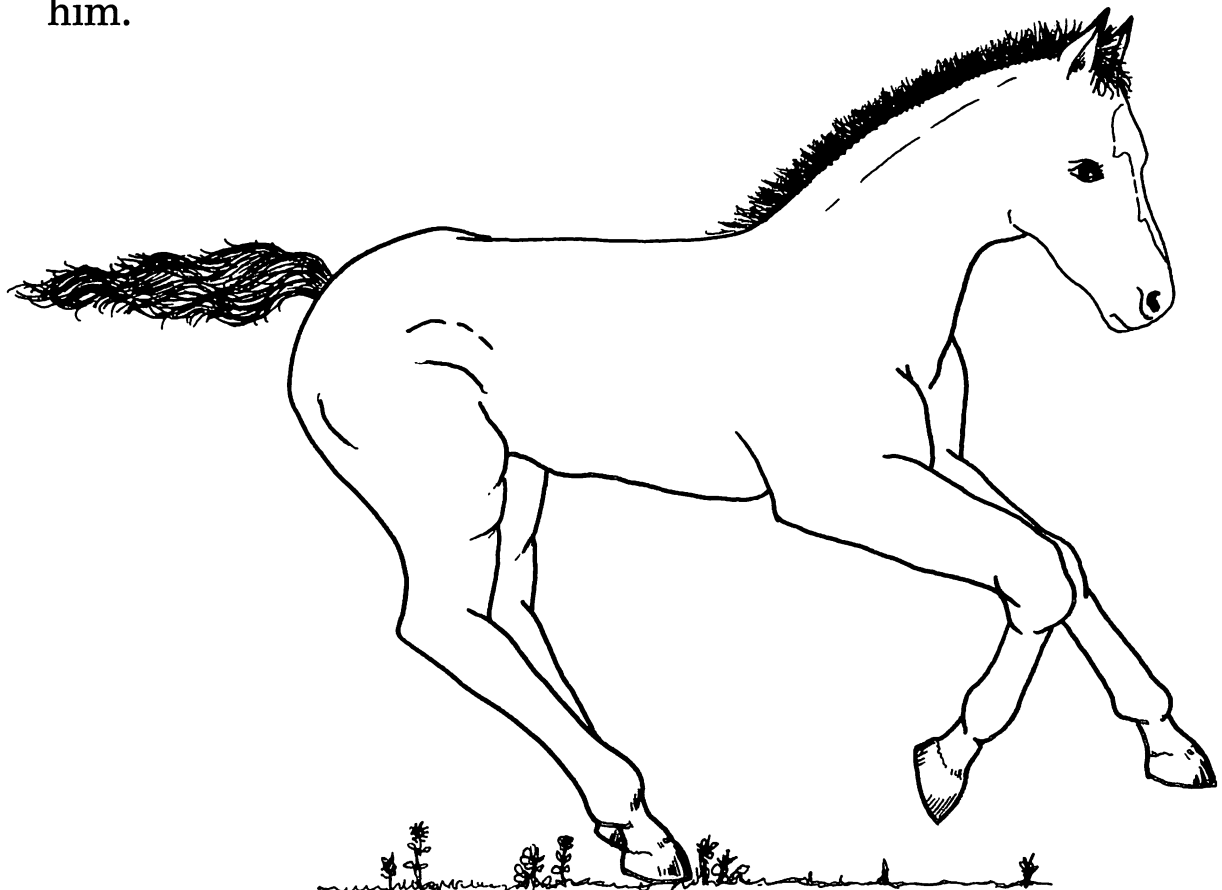
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And she ran! She didn't know where she was running. She knew only that it felt very good to run and that she wanted to run as fast as she could.

Sheeba ran down the main street away from the town, away from the women's house, away from the men, and away from Nilu.

Sheeba ran and ran, faster and faster. The men mandali ran behind her as fast as they could to try to catch her, but Sheeba ran much faster than the men. After all, she came from a family of racehorses!

"Oh, dear!" cried Nilu. "The little horse will run away from us and be lost! Baba will be very angry with me for letting her run away!" Nilu ran so hard that his lungs hurt, but he could not run as fast as Sheeba. He felt very unhappy because he did not want Baba to be angry with him.



While the men ran they all shouted, "Stop her! Stop her!" The people on the street stood and stared at the little horse running away and all the men chasing her.

Sheeba was still wearing the rope that Nilu had not held tightly enough. As she ran, the rope flew out behind her in the wind. Suddenly, as she was running faster and faster, the end of the rope flew into a bush and became tangled in the branches.

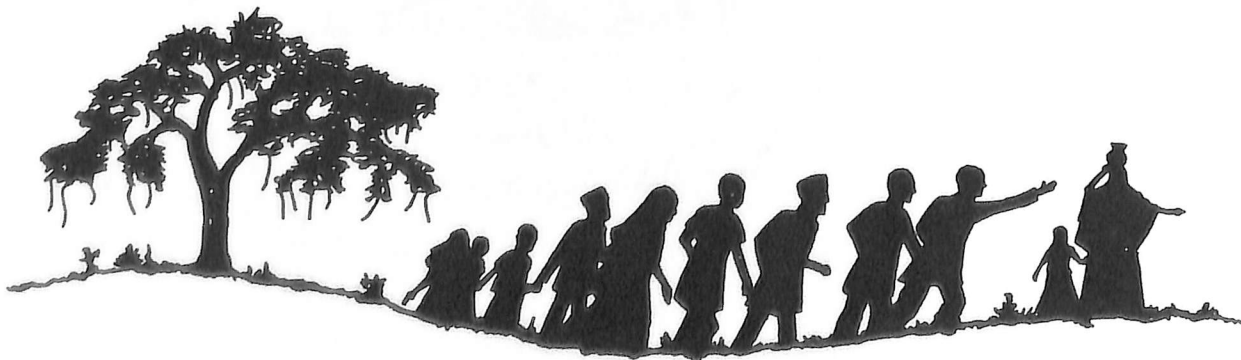
The rope caught in the bush and pulled against Sheeba's neck as she was running. Sheeba had been taught to stop if her rope was pulled. So when she felt the bush pulling her rope, she stopped.

A boy and girl saw what had happened. They quickly ran over to Sheeba and untangled the rope that was wound into the bush.

"Come, little horse," they said, laughing. "You must go home now!"

The men mandali came running up to the children and to Sheeba. Everyone was breathing hard from running so fast, and Nilu was breathing hardest of all because he had been so worried.

Then everyone was smiling and laughing. The men mandali thanked the children for helping to catch the little horse. Nilu took the rope, and as everyone walked back to the women's house, you can imagine how tightly he held it!



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All this time, Baba was with the women mandali. He had been there for a long time waiting. “What has happened to the men?” he asked. “Where can they be? They should have been here long ago!”

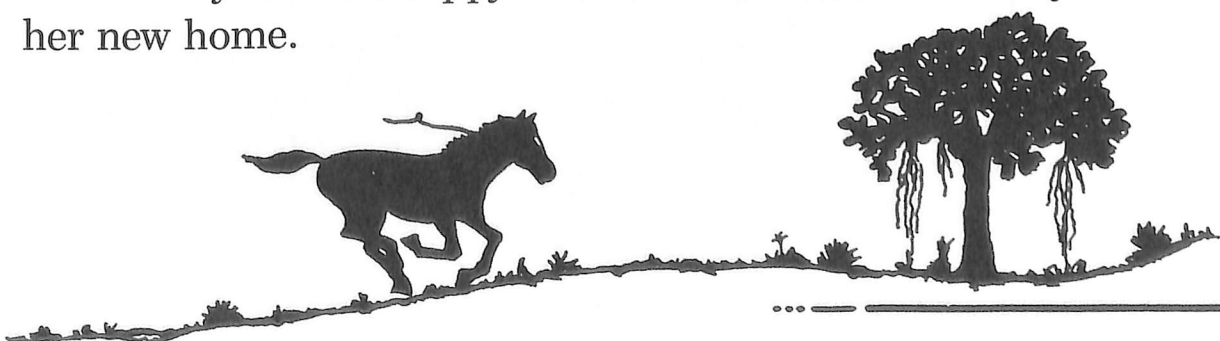
Finally the men arrived with the little horse, with a big crowd of people behind them! Baba pointed to Nilu. “Where have you been?” he asked. “What has kept you so long? We have all been waiting and waiting.”

“I-I’m very sorry, Baba,” stammered Nilu. “It was all my fault.” Then, hanging his head, he told Baba the whole story of Sheeba running away, and the men mandali chasing her, and the bush finally stopping her.

Baba frowned hard at Nilu while he was telling his story, but because Nilu was looking at the ground, he didn’t see the twinkle in Baba’s eyes. Baba looked serious and began to tap his foot, and this made Nilu even more nervous.

But when Nilu had finished telling the story and the little horse had come safely to Baba, Baba could not keep from smiling any longer. Baba stopped pretending to be angry with Nilu, and his face broke into a big smile as he gave Nilu a loving embrace.

Baba laughed and laughed, and the women mandali laughed, and the people from the town laughed, and the men mandali laughed, and Nilu laughed hardest of all because he was so relieved that Baba was not angry with him. Everyone was happy that Sheeba had come safely to her new home.



Sheeba Scares Herself

Mehera always knew the best ways to please Baba. When Baba told her about the little horse, Mehera knew that keeping Sheeba healthy and happy would make Baba happy. And as soon as she saw Sheeba, Mehera knew that Sheeba had had a long, hot run.

“Oh, Baba,” Mehera said, “Sheeba must be very tired and thirsty. May I give her some milk to drink?”

“Good idea,” Baba signed.

Mehera poured milk into a bowl and held it under Sheeba’s mouth. “Come, Sheeba,” she said, “wouldn’t you like some nice milk?” Sheeba drank happily because she was very thirsty.

Then Sheeba trotted out into the yard by the women’s house and began to explore her new home. It was a big yard, filled with mango trees and surrounded by a tall hedge. Mehera said, “Look, Baba! Sheeba is already at home in her own yard.”

Baba told Mehera that Sheeba was a thoroughbred horse. Her father was an Arabian horse, and her mother was an English racehorse. Arabian horses are famous for their beauty, and English racehorses are famous for their speed. That was why Sheeba was so beautiful and why she ran so fast.

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Mehera took good care of Sheeba. She gave her grass to eat and a special mix of oats and bran with salt and water. She rubbed Sheeba's legs twice every day and washed her coat with a damp cloth. During the day, Sheeba wandered freely in the yard, and Mehera made her run for exercise.

One day, Goher came out into the yard and put something on the ground. It was wet tea leaves spread on newspaper. Goher wanted the leaves to dry in the sun so that they could be saved and used later.

When Goher went back inside, Sheeba wandered over to sniff the tea leaves. She wondered if they would be good to eat. Sheeba lowered her head and put out her tongue to taste the tea leaves. They tasted good, so she took a big mouthful. But when Sheeba raised her head to chew, she took a big mouthful of newspaper too!

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The newspaper covered her eyes so that she could not see. Sheeba shook her head to get rid of the thing in front of her eyes. But she did not open her mouth to drop the paper. The tea leaves tasted much too good to think of spitting them out!

The paper crackled loudly, and Sheeba began to be frightened. She couldn't see! And what was that terrible crackling noise around her head?

Poor Sheeba! She shook her head and shook her head, but the newspaper only crackled and crackled. And she didn't know what it was!

Sheeba got so frightened that she began to run. She ran around and around the yard without being able to see where she was going. As she ran, she shook her head. That made the paper crackle again and frightened her even more!

Mani and Goher saw Sheeba and ran to Mehera shouting, "Mehera! Mehera! You must come and help Sheeba! Something is wrong!"

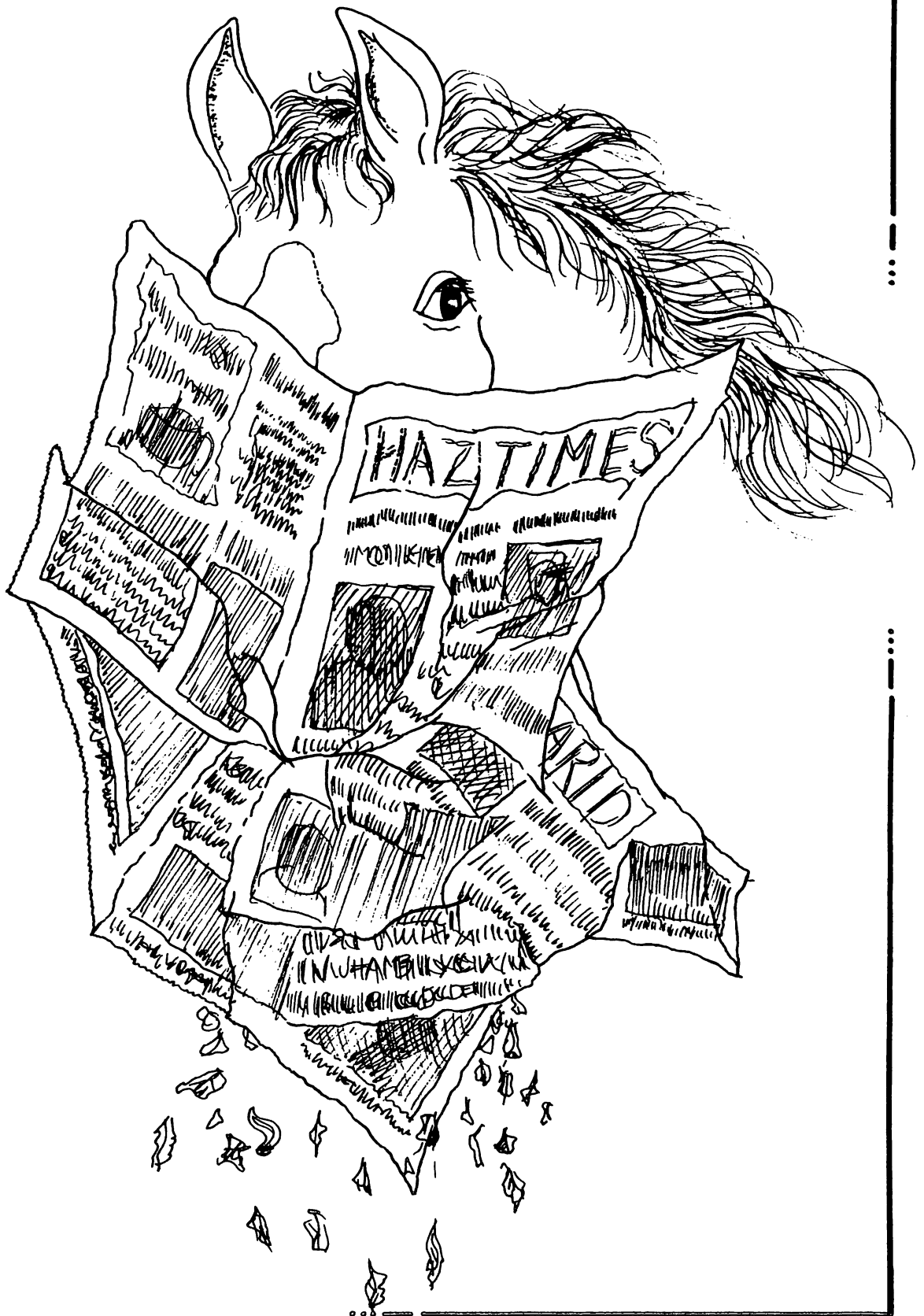
Mehera rushed into the yard calling, "Sheeba! Sheeba!" The little horse heard her name and ran toward Mehera, still shaking her head. As Sheeba came around the corner, Mehera snatched the paper away from her face.

Then Sheeba could see again! There was Mehera! Very suddenly, Sheeba stopped running. Calmly she looked around her to see what all the fuss was about.

"Sheeba!" Mehera gently scolded. "You frightened yourself, and you frightened all of us too!"

Sheeba looked innocently at Mehera and swallowed the delicious tea leaves.

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Sheeba Obeys Orders

It was very hot in Dehra Dun. The heat made everyone feel sleepy. Baba told the women that it would please him if they took a nap for one half hour at noon each day. "Then you will feel refreshed in the afternoon," he explained, "and you will have more energy."

Mehera's room looked out onto Sheeba's stall. Mehera could see Sheeba from the window of her room. Sheeba was so sweet and so beautiful that Mehera loved to watch her. Often Mehera would watch Sheeba from the window instead of taking her nap.





One day, Baba peeked into Mehera's room at nap time and caught Mehera looking out the window instead of sleeping.

"Oh, Baba," said Mehera, "look how sweet Sheeba is, standing in her stall!"

Baba walked over to the window and looked to where Mehera was pointing. The little horse was in her stall and standing very still.

"Sheeba is very beautiful, but what is she doing?" Baba asked.

"She is sleeping, Baba," said Mehera.

Baba nodded with approval. "I am very pleased with Sheeba. She is obeying my wish and taking her noontime nap, just as she should." Baba turned to Mehera and smiled. "It would make me happy if you took your nap every day too, just like Sheeba," he said.

Mehera smiled and felt very shy because she knew she had disobeyed, but after that she always took her noontime nap, like Sheeba.

Sheeba Finds a Friend

One day Mani came back from town with a black furry ball in her arms. It was a little cocker spaniel puppy that she had chosen as a gift for Baba. The puppy's name was Peter.

Peter was a mischievous little dog. He liked to run around and smell everything he could get his nose into. He was observant too. He watched every day when Baba or Mehera took a big bowl of milk out to the yard, and he wondered where the milk went.

One day Peter decided he would find out, so he sneaked into the yard and began to sniff around.

Peter smelled the fragrant bark of the mango trees and the sweet, ripe mangoes that had fallen to the ground. He smelled the delicious, spicy smell of Naja's cooking in the kitchen. He smelled the perfumy flowers growing in the hedge.

Then he smelled something new. It smelled like another animal. Peter ran into the stable to explore this new smell, and what did he find?



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He found himself looking up into Sheeba's big brown eyes. Now he knew where the milk had been going. It had been going to Sheeba!

Peter sniffed Sheeba, and Sheeba sniffed Peter. They decided they liked each other and would be friends.

That evening, Mani could not find Peter anywhere. She looked all over the house. She looked under the table and under the bed and under the sofa. No Peter!

She looked in the cupboards and in the chests and even in the oven. No Peter!

Mani was worried. Where could Peter be? Could he have run away? Mani decided to look for him outside.

She looked in the shed and she looked under the hedge, and finally she came to Sheeba's stall.

"Sheeba," Mani said, "have you seen Peter? I've been looking everywhere for him."

Sheeba shook her mane and stamped her foot. Mani looked at the pile of grass that Mehera had left for Sheeba to eat. There was Peter! He was curled up into a black furry ball, fast asleep.

Mani said, "Oh, Sheeba, you must like Peter very much to let him sleep there. It looks like you have made a friend."

After Peter and Sheeba became friends, they often played together. When Sheeba ran in the yard, Peter would run beside her and help her exercise. When Baba fed Sheeba her milk, Peter would help by catching stray drops and finishing the milk Sheeba couldn't drink.

Baba was pleased that his two dear pets were such good friends and played together so lovingly.

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Sheeba Learns to Kiss

Every day Mehera would come to Sheeba and say, “Kiss, Sheeba! Kiss! Kiss!” Then Mehera would kiss Sheeba and give her a lump of sugar.

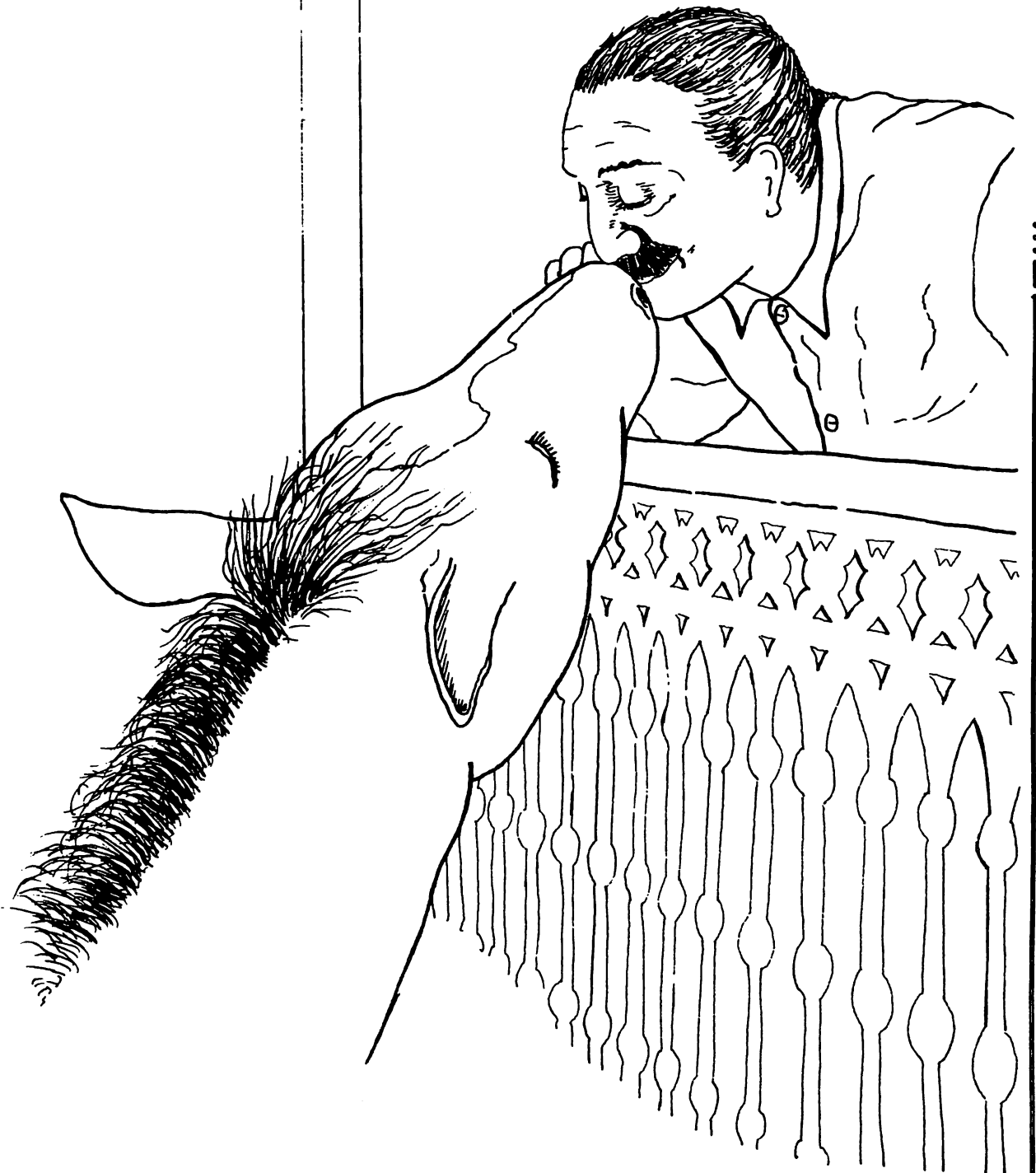
Sometimes Naja would come from the kitchen with a carrot. She would say, “Kiss, Sheeba! Kiss!” Then she would hug Sheeba’s neck and kiss and pat her, and give her the carrot to eat.

When Mani came into the yard to walk Peter, they would stop by Sheeba’s stall so that Peter could say hello to his friend. Mani would say, “Kiss! Kiss, Sheeba!” and kiss Sheeba’s cheek. Peter always wanted a kiss too.

In the afternoons, Baba would come out on the veranda and clap his hands for Sheeba. Sheeba knew it was Baba calling her and came to him immediately from wherever she was.

One day when Baba had called her and was giving her her daily milk, Mehera said, “Sheeba, kiss Baba!”

Suddenly Sheeba knew what “kiss” meant. It was something you did with people you loved. Sheeba loved Baba more than anyone, so she lifted her head and gave Baba a big kiss. Baba clapped his hands with pleasure, and the women all laughed with delight as Baba gave a big kiss back to Sheeba.



Sheeba Joins the Army

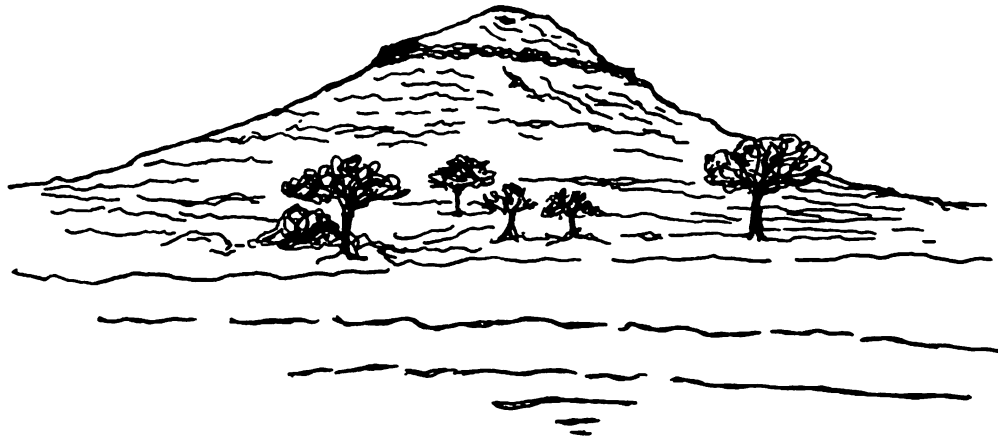
Sheeba lived happily with Baba and the mandali for three years. She had a stable at Baba's home in Meherazad. Now the men mandali had learned how to take care of her and helped Mehera with some of the daily tasks. Every day Baba fed Sheeba milk, Mehera fed her oats and rubbed her legs, and one of the men took her into the fields to exercise.

Sarosh was one of Baba's disciples who lived near Meherazad. He had not seen Baba for a long time. One day he came down the road to Meherazad and saw one of the men mandali leading a beautiful racehorse into the field beside Baba's house.

Sarosh called to him, "Whose horse is that? I have never seen such a beautiful horse around here before. She looks like a racehorse."

"She *is* a racehorse. She belongs to Meher Baba. She is one of his pets."

Sarosh was surprised to hear this. He did not know Baba had a horse!



When Sarosh saw Baba, he said, "Baba, what a beautiful pet you have! But I am very concerned about her getting the care she needs. I can see that she is a very valuable horse. Is she getting enough exercise? Is she getting proper care? If she got free somehow, she might get into trouble!"

Sarosh was in the army. He told Baba that the army school could take proper care of a good horse like Sheeba. "The officers in the army school love you, Baba. They are trained to take care of horses, and they would take special care of your special pet. Sheeba could serve you well there, Baba. Would you like to send her to the army?"

Baba stroked his chin and thought for a moment. Then he shook his head. "No," he said. "The army might be a good place for Sheeba, but Mehera loves Sheeba too much. Mehera would be sad if Sheeba went away, and I want Mehera to be happy. Sheeba should stay at Meherazad and keep Mehera happy."

Sarosh left Baba, but he was still worried about the horse. The mandali were busy with many jobs to do. Sarosh thought that a young thoroughbred horse needed more exercise and attention than the mandali could give to Sheeba.

He decided that he should let Mehera know about his offer before he gave it up. He went to see Mehera and told her about the army school. He told her that Sheeba would be well cared for at the school, and that the officers would love Sheeba.

When Baba came into the dining room for his lunch, Mehera said to him, "Baba, if the officers in the army school will take good care of Sheeba, if they will feed her and exercise her and rub her legs, I would not be sad if she went to live there."

Baba raised his eyebrows and looked surprised. "But I told Sarosh that Sheeba should stay with you."

"I really wouldn't mind, Baba," said Mehera. "I will be happy with whatever you decide."





Baba looked closely at Mehera. "Are you sure?" he gestured. "You won't be sad if Sheeba goes away?"

"No, Baba," said Mehera. "I will be very happy that Sheeba is so well cared for. I promise I will not be sad."

"Very well. I will tell Sarosh." Baba clapped his hands to call Sarosh to come to him. He told Sarosh, "You can take Sheeba to the army school. It will be a good place for her to live, and Mehera has promised she will not be sad. But I don't want you to take her right now. Wait until I have left to spend the summer months in Poona." Baba loved Sheeba very much, and he did not want to see her leave Meherazad.

When Baba and the women mandali left Meherazad to spend the hot months in Poona, Sarosh brought Sheeba to the army school. She had a clean stable, plenty of good food, and lots of exercise to keep her healthy. The officers loved Sheeba, and she was happy there. But she never forgot Baba and Mehera and her other special friends in Meherazad.



A Picnic for Sheeba



When Baba returned from Poona, he asked Sarosh about Sheeba. "Does she like her new home, Sarosh?"

"Yes, Baba," said Sarosh. "She is very happy in her new home, and the army officers all love her. The trainer is testing her running speed. He has found that she is a very swift horse. He thinks she can run races and win!"

Baba smiled and gestured, "Perhaps she will run a race someday."

Later Baba brought the women some exciting news. He told them to put on their prettiest saris and get ready for a trip. They were going to visit Sheeba!

The women were very excited!

"Let's take her some mangoes to eat," said Mehera. "She loves mangoes so very much."

"Oh, yes! And she loves carrots too!" said Naja. "Let's take some carrots to feed her!"

“She loves to eat tea leaves and coffee grounds,” said Goher. “Remember how she frightened herself by eating tea leaves? Let’s take some of those.”

“And bread,” said Mani. “Sheeba loves bread. Let’s be sure to take some bread and some cookies.”

Everyone thought of something that Sheeba liked to eat and ran to get it. When they had put all the treats for Sheeba in a bag, it was so big and heavy that they could hardly carry it.

As Sarosh was driving them to see Sheeba, Goher said, “Sheeba always used to kiss when we said, ‘Kiss! Kiss!’ Do you think she will remember her trick?”

When the car arrived at Sheeba’s stable, the men who were taking care of the horses stopped their work and stared. Who were these funny women with the big bag? What were they going to do?

Sheeba was eating grass in the yard. Mehera called to her, “Sheeba! Sheeba!”





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Sheeba lifted her head and trotted over to them. She shook her head to say hello. Sheeba was very glad to see her friends.

“She knows us,” said Mehera. “I wonder if she remembers how to kiss. Kiss, Sheeba, kiss!”

Sheeba raised her head and gave Mehera a big kiss. How happy the women were that Sheeba remembered them and remembered her trick too.

The women opened their big bag and gave Sheeba all the treats they had brought for her. Sheeba ate the carrots and the bread and the cookies and the coffee and the tea and all the good things the women had brought.

When Sheeba had eaten almost everything in the bag, Mehera pulled out a fresh mango and cut it for her. Sheeba liked the hard pit as much as the soft, sweet fruit. She ate the fruit, then sucked and sucked on the pit.

Mehera did not want Sheeba to swallow the pit and hurt herself, but Sheeba liked it too much to let Mehera take it away quickly. Mehera tried and tried to take it out of Sheeba’s mouth, but Sheeba enjoyed the pit for a long time before she finally let Mehera take it away.

When all the food was gone, the women patted Sheeba and said goodbye. Sheeba shook her head and whinnied to say goodbye. Then she turned and started eating grass. The women got back into Sarosh’s car and came home to Meherazad.

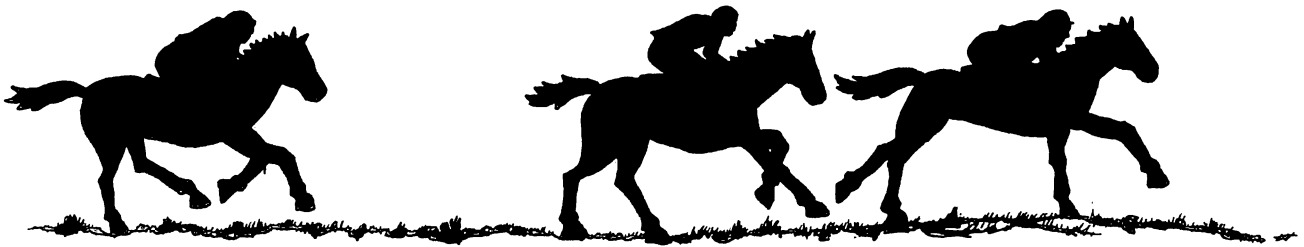
They had enjoyed visiting Sheeba in her new home and were glad they had given her such a good picnic. When they told Baba about Sheeba’s picnic, he raised his hand and made a circle with his thumb and forefinger, a gesture that means “perfect.”

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Sheeba the Racehorse

After Sheeba joined the army, she was grown up enough to run in races with other horses. One of the officers came to Baba and asked him if Sheeba could run in a race. Baba told the officer to try Sheeba in a practice race. If she did well, and if she liked racing, she could run one real race for the officers.

Sheeba was a little confused at her practice race because she had never run in a race before. At first she did not understand what she was supposed to do. But after watching the other horses, she understood that she should run with them and run very fast to get ahead of them. Sheeba thought racing was fun.



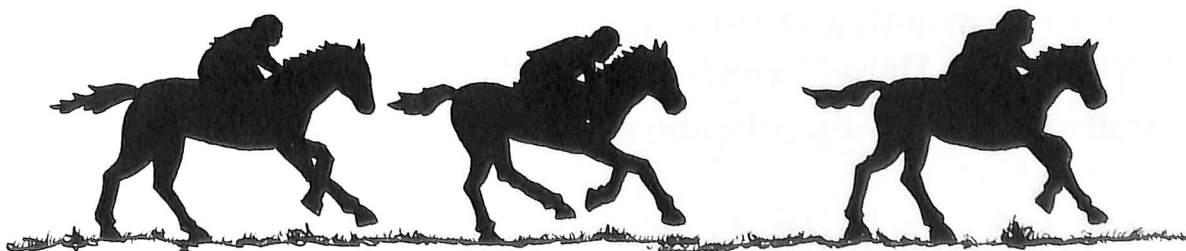


Then the officers entered Sheeba in a real race. Because Sheeba ran so fast, she had to start behind the other horses. That way the other horses would have an equal chance of winning. Baba told the women mandali that if Sheeba won the race, they would all go to visit her.

After the race was over, one of the officers came to tell Baba about it.

“Oh, Baba!” he said. “I wish you could have seen Sheeba in the race! How happy she was to be running!”

“The horses were to run around a big circle. Sheeba started far behind the other horses, but when the race began she ran very fast and caught up with them right away.”



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“The other horses all ran together side by side. Sheeba could not get between them and had to slow down. Because the inside of the circle is the shortest distance to run, all the horses were running as close as they could to the rail on the inside of the circle. Sheeba tried to pass them on the inside of the circle, but she couldn't.”

“Sheeba's rider thought he would have to stop her. But what do you think she did, Baba? Sheeba ran all the way around to the outside of the circle, and she ran so fast that she ran ahead of all the horses.”

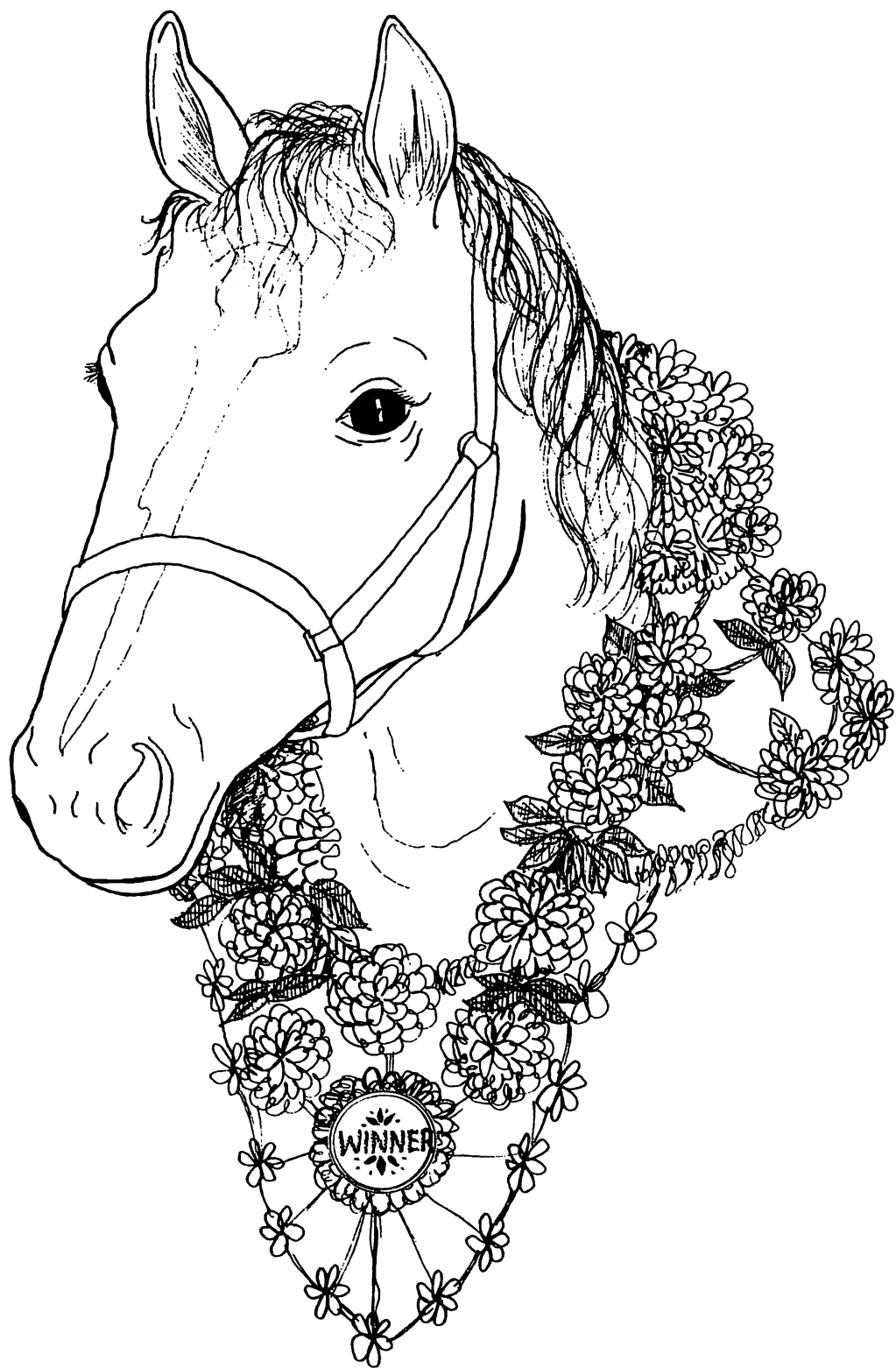
“Soon Sheeba was in front of all but the two fastest horses. All the officers were so excited! They were cheering, and jumping up and down, and shouting, ‘Sheeba! Sheeba!’

“Sheeba ran and ran past the horse that was second. Then she ran and ran past the horse that was first. When Sheeba ran across the finish line, she was far ahead of every other horse in the race!”

“But Sheeba would not stop running. She was happy to be running, and she was not tired at all. She wanted to run and run!”

“Finally her rider stopped her and brought her back to the finish line. All the officers were cheering and cheering. Here is the photograph they took of her, Baba.”

“Baba and the women looked at the photograph. Sheeba had a big wreath around her neck that said ‘WINNER.’ ‘Why, look, Baba!’ said Mehera. ‘Sheeba doesn't look tired at all! She looks like she is ready to run another race!’”



When Baba and the women went to visit Sheeba, she was groomed and slim and strong. Sheeba shook her head and gave them kisses and let them know she was glad to see her old friends again.

“Baba, you must have given her the energy to win,” said Mehera. Everyone agreed that Sheeba was a very special horse.



Baba smiled and was very happy.

