

A HORSE CALLED
Courage
ANNE SCHRAFF



PAGETURNERS®

Chapter 1

Just think of it!” Sommer Oldham cried excitedly. “We can spend the summer working with horses. And get paid for it too!”

Vanessa Downey grabbed Sommer’s hand. “You sure they’ll hire us?” she asked. “Are you totally sure?”

“Yes.” Sommer smiled. “My uncle owns the summer camp. He said he needs some teenage counselors to work with the little kids.”

Standing nearby, Tami Nguyen smiled too. Sommer and Vanessa were not her best friends. But they were best friends with each other. Tami hadn’t had a best friend in high school. She was shy. Making friends was hard.

Sometimes Tami tagged along with Vanessa and Sommer. But the two always talked to each other. They usually ignored her.

“How about you, Tami? Are you coming to work at Camp Colorado too?” Sommer asked. “I promised my uncle I could get two other girls besides myself.”

“Oh yes,” Tami said in surprise. She needed the money. But she didn’t share the excitement and happiness of the other two girls. Tami feared being so far from home for the first time. Worse yet, she was terrified of horses!

The part of town where Tami lived was called Little Vietnam. Along with her parents, grandfather, and her three siblings, she felt safe and comfortable there. But next September Tami would be starting college. She needed to earn some money this summer. The Nguyen family had been struggling for a while. Tami was determined to pay for her own education.



“Grandfather,” Tami said that night. “I think I can get a summer job at a children’s camp. A girl I know from school is arranging it.”

“Excellent,” her grandfather said. Just after the fall of Saigon, he had escaped from Vietnam in a flimsy boat. Many of those with him had drowned. Pirates killed many more. But he had made it to the United States, along with his wife. With them they’d brought an orphaned boy who would become Tami’s father.

“But I’m a little scared, Grandfather. Camp Colorado is up in the mountains. It’s about a hundred miles from here,” Tami said.

“We traveled over thousands of miles,” Grandfather said with a smile. “You have not that far to go, Tami.”

“I know,” she said. “We’ll have to ride the horses there. And I am afraid of horses.”

“You must not let fear control you,” Grandfather said. “You must say to yourself that you will be brave.”



A few days later, everyone applying for jobs at the camp was interviewed. Tami filled out the application. She tried to hide her fear when she spoke to the camp director. Like Sommer and Vanessa, Tami was hired immediately.

One week later all the camp employees gathered. They boarded a bus headed for Camp Colorado. Tami didn't know any of the passengers except Vanessa and Sommer. And of course those two girls shared a seat. They talked constantly to one another.

Tami sat alone, looking out the window. She didn't blame the girls for not paying attention to her. They had much more in common with each other than they did with her. Tami concentrated on feeling grateful.

This job would help her earn money for college.

The sun shined brightly. The bus rolled through traffic. Tami fought the desire to run away and hide. She had never been comfortable with strangers. And she was surrounded by teens she didn't know.

The bus began to climb the steep mountain road. "Isn't this exciting, Tami?" Vanessa said. "The only bummer is the cell reception sucks up here." It was the first time today that she had talked to Tami.

"Um, yes," she said, trying to sound enthusiastic. But in truth she was more frightened than excited. If she had been going camping with her family, she would have been truly happy.

Tami felt miserable. She knew she would miss dinner tonight. Her family would sit down to delicious *pho* and spring rolls. There would be yummy moon cakes for

dessert. They were made from sweet rice and filled with bananas and raisins. The family would have a comfortable evening. Nothing unexpected would happen.

With her whole heart, Tami wished she could be there with them. The bus climbed the winding mountain road. She felt sadder as each mile took her farther from home.

Chapter 2

It was midmorning when the bus reached the camp. Camp Colorado was a beautiful place. There were many little log cabins. One very large cabin was for dining and recreation. A lake sparkled at the bottom of a hill. Sad as she was, Tami realized it really was a lovely setting.

Twenty young people filed out from the bus. The camp director met them with a clipboard.

“Hi, guys. I’m Dane Morgan,” he said with a smile. He didn’t look more than twenty, but he was confident and self-assured. Tami couldn’t help but notice that he was handsome too. “First thing you need to do is to fill out these papers,” he

said. “Here’s your chance to express your preferences. What kind of work do you want to do around here? We don’t want to put any square pegs in round holes!”

Everybody laughed. All the girls giggled. They whispered to each other about how gorgeous Dane was. He had thick, curly hair and big brown eyes and dimples in his cheeks. Sommer nudged Vanessa. “Is he totally cool or what?” she said.

Tami looked over the list of available jobs: counselor, horseback riding, sports, crafts, kitchen help, maintenance. Sitting at one of the picnic tables, she quickly checked kitchen help. Ha! She would be happiest cutting up vegetables and running the dishwasher.

Vanessa and Sommer looked over at Tami. “We’re putting horseback riding as first choice,” Vanessa said. “That’s the most fun. Be sure to write that down too, Tami.”

Tami had never admitted her fear of

horses to the other girls. One day the three of them had gone riding in the park. Tami had been terrified the whole time. It didn't matter that her horse was as gentle as a big pussycat. Tami was ashamed of being such a timid person.

"Everybody will want that," Tami said. "So we may not all get it." Then she quickly folded her paper. It would be embarrassing if everyone saw that she had chosen to work in the kitchen. After all, the camp was about riding horses over the beautiful trails.

With any luck, Tami thought, she could spend her time slicing vegetables and making salads. That way she could avoid scary horses and strange people altogether.

"I put crafts as my second choice," Sommer said.

"Me too," Vanessa said. "What did you put for second choice, Tami?"

Tami had chosen maintenance. She would rather empty trash cans than face the

horses. She didn't want to teach children how to make papier-mâché chickens either. "Crafts, yes," she lied.

"I wonder where Dane spends most of his time," Sommer said. "I'd sign up for anything to be where he was!"

"All right, you guys," Dane said. He had returned to collect the papers. "You can spend the next hour finding your bunks and getting settled. You'll get your assignments at lunchtime. The little kids don't start arriving until tomorrow. Enjoy the peace and quiet while it lasts. Or you can go riding or swimming this afternoon."

"Did you hear that?" Sommer whispered. "We can go riding!"

"Yeah," Vanessa said with a grin. She looked over at the big corral. Most of the horses were reddish-brown. There were a few black and mixed-color horses. One was silver-gray with a white mane.

"Do you see that silver beauty?" Sommer

cried. “Whoa! It’s the color of smoke. Its mane is like spun silk. That’s the one I’d like to ride!”

“That’s Courage,” Dane said. The girls hadn’t seen him walk up behind them. “I’m afraid he’s a very high-spirited animal. We don’t usually let inexperienced riders ride him.”

“Oh, come on, Dane! We’re excellent riders,” Sommer said.

Tami thought all the horses looked huge and dangerous. But the silver one did seem to be the fiercest of all.

“Do you ride?” Dane asked Tami. For a moment, she couldn’t believe that the handsome guy was actually talking to her.

“Yes, but not very well,” she said.

Dane smiled. “Well, that’s okay. Being here will give you a good chance to become a better rider.”

Vanessa and Sommer stared at Tami and Dane. They wondered why he had stopped

to talk to her, of all people. There were several brunettes here at Camp Colorado. But Tami was the only Asian American girl. Maybe that's why Dane noticed her.

"Was your family from Vietnam?" Dane asked. He seemed genuinely interested in Tami.

"Yes," Tami said. "I was born here. My grandparents came to the United States with my dad."

Dane nodded. "My parents adopted my sisters from Korea five years ago. They had two boys—me and my brother—but they wanted girls too. Now I've got a six-year-old sister named Tiffany. The seven-year-old is named Brittany. They're so cute and a lot of fun."

Tami thought Dane was nice. It was odd for her to feel comfortable with a stranger. But she felt at home with him for some reason. Maybe it was because he had such a friendly way about him.

When Dane walked away, Vanessa and Sommer rushed over to Tami. Sommer had an angry look in her eyes. “What’s the deal? Do you know him from somewhere?” she demanded.

“No. I never saw him before today,” Tami said. “But he seems very nice.”

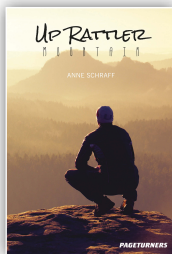
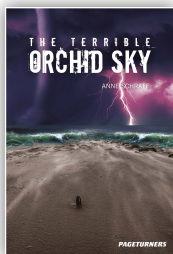
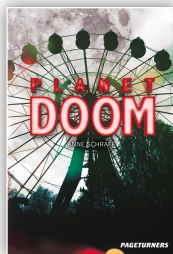
“Wow, you’re a really a big flirt!” Vanessa said in a rude voice. “Aren’t you, Tami? It was gross. I couldn’t believe how you were throwing yourself at him!”

PAGETURNERS® | ADVENTURE

A HORSE CALLED *Courage*

Tami Nguyen's summer job as a camp counselor takes her away from home for the first time. She's lonely and shy. It's hard for her to make friends. But those problems are nothing compared to her fear of the camp's horses.

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