

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.

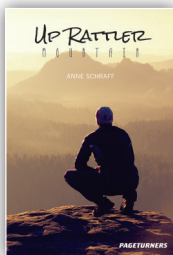
With her whole heart, Tami wished she could be there with them. The bus climbed the winding mountain road. She felt sadder as each mile took her farther from home.

**PAGETURNERS®** | ADVENTURE

A HORSE CALLED  
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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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**PLANET  
DOOM**

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# Chapter 1

**W**ho would ever forget the night the amusement park burned down? Its grand opening had been one week away. Reggie Daniels and his girlfriend, Joanna Peck, had been high school students then.

Now it was more than two years later. They were both working and taking courses at City College.

Like everybody else, Reggie and Joanna had heard the sirens. They had seen the wild flames dancing hundreds of feet into the air. The smoke poured into the sky. It blotted out the moon and the stars. For a while neighbors feared that half the city would burn. But the fire department did a good job. They even saved many of the buildings

within the park. But the park had never had its opening.

It was a Saturday night. Reggie and Joanna were on a date. The two stared at the ruins behind the ugly plywood walls. Big signs were plastered all over them. They read “No Admittance.”

“Why don’t they just tear the whole mess down? Then they can build something else here,” Joanna said. The burned amusement park was now an awful eyesore in the neighborhood.

“Dad says they want to raze the place. Build a shopping center,” Reggie said. “So far, though, nobody has enough cash. Everybody’s offering pennies on the dollar for the land.”

Five years ago, everything had been different. Eddie Scott, a kid from the neighborhood, had made it big in baseball. He was a star. An American League team had drafted him. The team had signed him

to a multimillion-dollar contract. Eddie was one of the few from these mean streets to ever have such luck. He was so grateful.

He decided to help his neighborhood by building a state-of-the-art amusement park. He called it Planet Doom because it had an outer space theme. But then the fire had broken out. All his dreams had gone up in flames. Eddie's career soon flamed out too. After two years he was cut from the team. Then he vanished. Nobody knew what had happened to him. Worse, nobody cared.



Joanna peered through a narrow crack between two pieces of plywood. "It looks so weird in the moonlight. I can still see the Ferris wheel and the roller coaster. What fun we would have had if they'd gotten it up and running."

"My buddy Erik says there's a curse on the place," Reggie said. "That's why nothing worked out." Reggie laughed. Then he made

spooky sounds, mimicking the ghost who maybe roamed through the deserted park.

Joanna poked him playfully in the ribs. “Oh, stop it! There’s no curse. Some fool probably just tossed a cigarette into a pile of trash on a hot windy night. That’s why it all went up in flames.”

“I don’t know,” Reggie said. “I heard that some weird old dude owned this land a long time ago. They say his wife finally had enough of him and left. When she ran off, they say the old man put a curse on the house and the land. Then his house burned down. When they built the amusement park here, maybe the curse stuck.”

“Oh, Reggie! Stop with the curse nonsense,” she said.

“Eddie Scott must have been cursed too,” Reggie said. “Say, what’s with that dude these days? He gets millions of bucks to play in the majors. And he has one good season. Then he busts his ankle so

bad. Nobody can fix it. He never did play great again. The poor dude must have been cursed. Or maybe the guy was just a jerk. Who knows?”

“Just some bad luck,” Joanna said. “Happens to a lot of guys. The injury healed. But he lost his momentum or his confidence or something. Look at the stats. Plenty of guys who were Rookie of the Year ended up in the minors. They scrambled for less money than you get flipping burgers.”

Joanna pushed at the plywood to widen the crack so she could see better. “I remember really looking forward to Planet Doom opening. It was going to be such a huge blast. At last we’d have something really fun to do in this crappy neighborhood. It seemed too good to be true. I guess it was.”

Suddenly the plywood gave way. A two-foot-wide opening appeared in the fence. The space was plenty wide for somebody to slip through.

Joanna turned and grinned at Reggie. “It’s only eight o’clock. I told Mom I’d be home by eleven. Want to take a look around?”

“Sure,” Reggie said. “I always wanted to take a date to a haunted amusement park.”

“Oh, Reggie, will you stop it!” Joanna laughed. “These are just some old deserted buildings.”

When they had squeezed through the opening, Reggie carefully moved the plywood board back into place. He didn’t want a passerby to notice the big opening and discover that someone had trespassed.

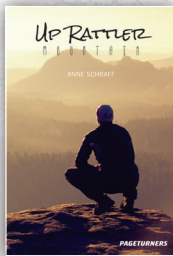
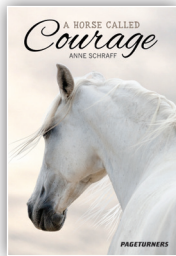
“Welcome to Planet Doom,” Reggie said in a deep ominous voice. “Here you can travel to the farthest reaches of outer space. Are you ready to encounter terrors beyond your wildest nightmares? Abandon all hope, you who enter here!”

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# PLANET DOOM

Reggie and Joanna can't resist exploring the burned-out amusement park. Before the evening is over, they take some terrifying rides and meet an even scarier old man. Grief has destroyed his sanity. The young couple barely escape with their lives.

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