

HOW TO HELP HORSES LEARN

IS NARCOLEPSY INHERITED?

EQUUS

THE HORSE OWNER'S RESOURCE

DECEMBER 2012
ISSUE 423

**HOOF
FUNCTION
BY THE
NUMBERS**

**The ins
& outs of
GATES**

**HELP FOR
HORSES
IN NEED**

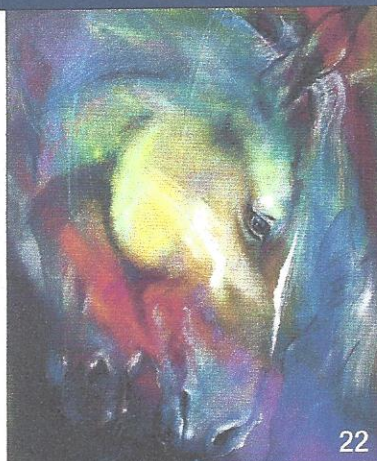
BONUS!
**THE ANNUAL
EQUUS INDEX**

Visit EQUUSmagazine.com

\$4.99 U.S./\$5.99 CAN



Display until December 25, 2012



22



30

DEPARTMENTS

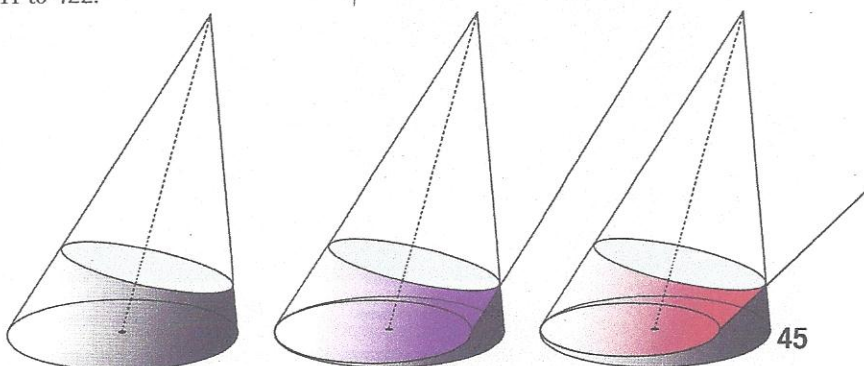
- 4 **LETTERS**
- 11 **HANDS ON**
 - Seasonal mare behavior
 - Winter weather watch
 - Warm welcomes for your farrier and veterinarian
- 20 **TACK & GEAR**
Gifts under \$50
- 66 **EQUUS CONSULTANTS**
Do horses learn by example?
- 72 **STOCK & TRADE**
- 75 **ADVERTISERS' PRODUCT GUIDE**
- 75 **GLOSSARY**
Words followed by this symbol ^o are defined here
- 80 **BACK PAGE**
Forever young

FEATURES

- 22 **Finding my path**
I traveled to Arizona to learn more about horses—and on the way made some important discoveries about myself.
- 30 **The ins and outs of gates**
Consider these guidelines when installing or upgrading the components that are so crucial in keeping your horses safely contained.
- 38 **Help for horses in need**
The Equitarian Initiative is a new nonprofit organization with a mission to provide care for the world's hard-working animals and education for their caretakers.
- 45 **CONFORMATION INSIGHTS**
The Vitruvian hoof
Ancient mathematical systems help you learn to spot a normal hoof.
- 59 **Annual EQUUS index**
A guide to articles appearing in issues 411 to 422.

RESEARCH & MORE

- 6 **MEDICAL FRONT**
 - Surprising correlation between eye problems and colic
 - Heredity and performance
 - A little solitude aids learning
 - A case for time off
 - Is narcolepsy inherited?
 - Low zinc levels linked to disease
- 15 **CASE REPORT**
Back on her feet: Searching for the reason behind a mare's reluctance to stand, her veterinarians arrive at a most unusual diagnosis.
- 64 **TRUE TALE**
A second chance: In the wake of a cancer diagnosis, I nearly gave up on Tango. But I decided to keep him, and he remains a source of joy and strength to this day.



Finding my path

I traveled to Arizona to learn more about horses—and on the way made some important discoveries about myself.

By Elizabeth B. Herman

The Arizona hills are dry and bright. I left Baltimore yesterday in sleet and have flown 2,000 miles to spend half a day with a woman I've only met on the phone. Crazy? Yes, but these are crazy times for me.

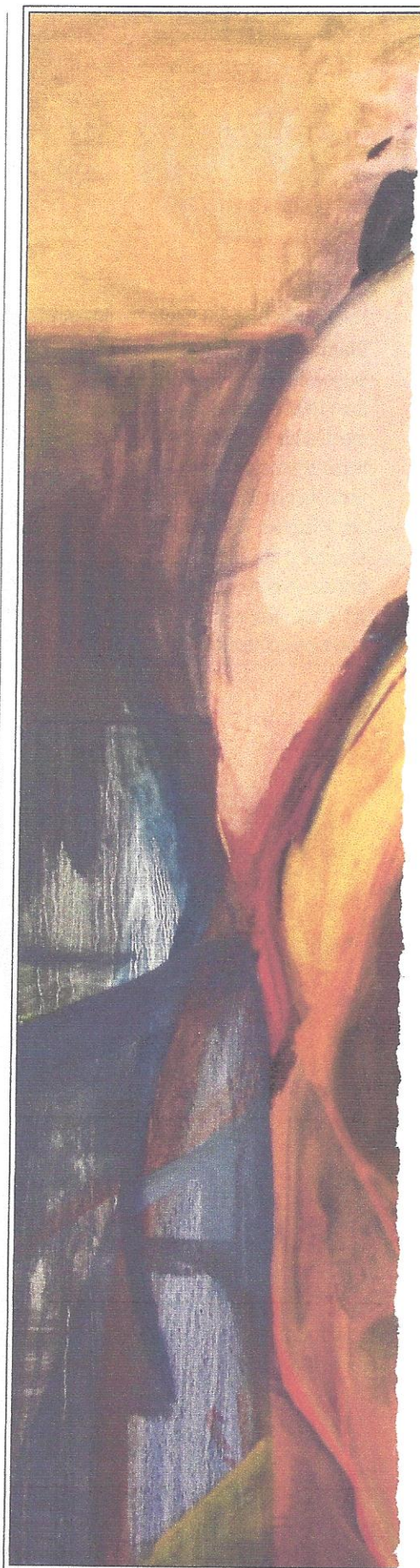
As I step out of the car, a yellow Lab bounds up and lets me bury my face in his fur. "That's Cole," says the willowy young woman striding up in jeans, dusty boots and a Carhartt vest that matches her sage green eyes. This is my new teacher, Koelle Simpson.

I follow Koelle into the dry, tidy barnyard, where cacti grow in the paddocks and shaggy horses tread dust, not grass. Her mellifluous voice and

calm presence are just what I expected from a shaman, horse whisperer, life coach. More important, they are just what I need.

My inner clock is ticking with excitement, but Koelle sits down across a fire pit from me as if we have all the time in the world. I take a seat and she asks about my writing. I tell her I have planned a book of 12 personal essays—five are done and three have been published.

"I have just lost my best excuse for not working on it," I say. Two months ago, I was let go from a well-paid vice presidency by a new CEO who wanted to hire his own number two. Any day, I expect to be offered an interim vice presidency that could seamlessly become permanent. It will allay my financial fears—but may also snuff out the risky,





"HIGH 1" CARRIE GREEN

flickering urge to try full-time consulting, training and writing instead.

At the hitching post, a shaggy tobiano pinto nickers. Koelle's gaze is kind and steady. She is still.

We discuss today's work. "You already know a lot about horses," Koelle says, "but let me review the role of the equine leader. Wild horses are led by a matriarch mare that the herd chooses to follow. They don't select her for her size, age, color or other physical characteristics. They follow the one who is most calm and observant to changes in the landscape, the one they can trust to see subtle cues and keep them safe. She uses no more aggression than necessary to correct disruptions in the herd.

"Humans toggle back and forth between two

leadership models: domination and schmoozing. Horses don't respond well to either one. All beings are drawn to the confident, centered energy of the matriarch mare."

We grab halters and leads and enter a large, dusty paddock to get horses—or, as Koelle puts it, "to see who wants to play today." I am wondering if there is a type we want or don't want, mare or gelding, old or young, high or low-energy. By the end of the day I will see that each of these Fox Trotters can train a human in its own distinct way.

Gazing at them, Koelle says, "I don't know all these horses, and they have no training for this work.

They don't need any. We are simply going to meet each other in the round pen, get to know each other, and play a while."

Play. She uses the word freely, but it sounds strange. A few years ago, at a management retreat for senior staff, we did an exercise. We were all dealt four random cards, each of which bore a single word describing a preferred working style. We were asked to walk around trading cards until we held four that felt right to us. When you offered a card to other people, they did not have to take it. My president—the one who hired me, not his successor—smiled and handed me a blue card. "This one's yours." I proudly accepted the "RIGOROUS" card and still have it on my desk. If there was a card that said "PLAYFUL," I never saw it.

"Humans **toggle** back and forth between two leadership models: **domination** and **schmoozing**. Horses don't respond well to either one."



▶▶▶▶

Koelle leads a black mare and I walk with a buckskin who strikes me as surly. I tie her to the hitching post as Koelle leads the black into the round pen, which is about 50 feet in diameter and has solid, smooth walls about 12 feet high. There is an observation deck above, reached by a spiral staircase.

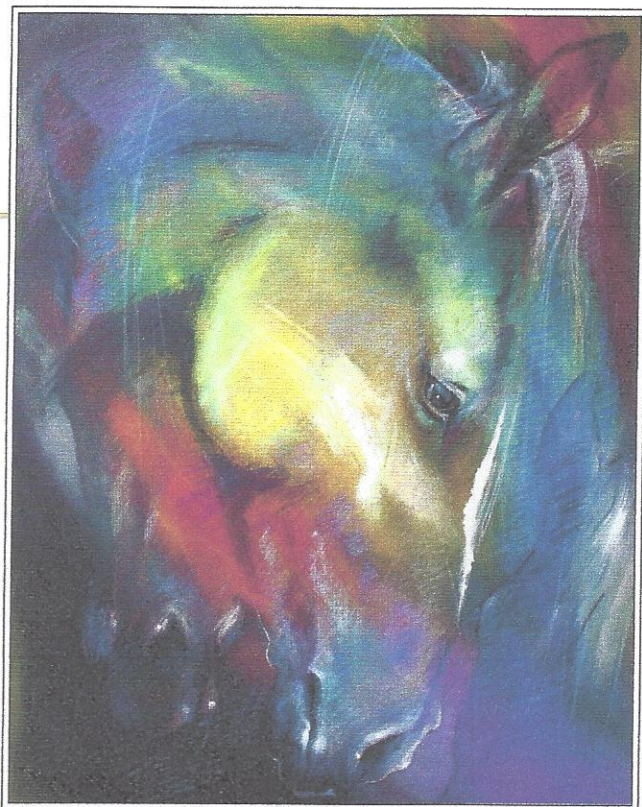
Koelle used to work with Monty Roberts, the horse whisperer who uses the horse's own native body language—that he calls “Equus,” in which “no gesture is trivial”—to start young horses under saddle, without force, in a round pen like this one. Roberts’ “Advance and Retreat” practice is based upon every horse’s natural curiosity and herd instinct; if you send a horse away from you, he will eventually come back.

Koelle uses the “Equus” language to help humans develop the clear, authentic communication skills needed to lead other beings of any species. The first moments in the round pen allow each being to see how the other moves and behaves. Then you, human partner, send the horse away. Reliably, the horse will shrink the circle to assess whether you are a safe companion. Are your gestures fair, focused, clear, confident? If so, he will lick and chew, indicating relaxation. Finally, he may lower or bow his head to show acceptance, a gift that invites you to join—perhaps even lead—herd activity.

It is not as simple as it sounds.

▶▶▶▶

Once I am seated in the viewing area, Koelle looks up at me. “Horse language is mostly silent. I won’t talk



while we work. Watch closely what we both do.” She unsnaps the line from the halter and sends the mare off around the pen. I’ve never worked with Fox Trotters before, and her gait is unfamiliar to me.

While I am busy with this, Koelle has walked a small circle inside the horse’s path, eliciting pace changes. The mare pauses, spins to change direction, then spirals in and stops at the woman’s shoulder. Koelle rubs her forehead. The mare drops her head and chews, then rests her head on Koelle’s arm. This is “Join Up”—now the horse will follow Koelle.

Smiling, Koelle turns right, then left, with the mare hugging her shoulder through every turn. They do neat figure eights, nearly touching but keeping polite distance between their feet. I notice that Koelle lets the horse travel at her left or right shoulder, depending on the shape of the turn. I have been trained to stay on the horse’s left or “near” side when leading, the side from which swords were carried in battle and from which we mount.

They stop. “What did you see?” I saw the black mare reverse but did not see

Koelle’s signal to do so. I saw the mare’s inside ear key on Koelle and saw the mare spiral in, but I missed cues that she was ready to Join Up. The lessons I am here to learn are kicking in.

Lesson One: Preconceived notions—what I “know” (and often, what I fear)—prevent me from seeing what is happening in front of me now.

▶▶▶▶

I lead the buckskin mare into the round pen. Koelle clomps up the stairs to watch. “I’ll be here to help if you need it,” she says. I pat the mare’s jaw and unsnap the line, eager to demonstrate my skill.

The horse eyes me with ears at half mast, unimpressed. I step up and cluck to send her off. “Not too close,” Koelle says. “Express yourself; then give her room to do that, too. If she kicks out, you could get hurt.” This lazy horse won’t kick; she won’t even trot. I toss the line at her rump, move in and out. She stops to notice a banging sound outside the pen. “Come on, mare,” I growl, and toss the line and stomp at her, but no dice.

Koelle says I am confusing the horse, that my motions are not as smooth and purposeful as we need. “You’re too far ahead of her shoulder, which blocks forward motion. Mind your eye contact. Be clear.” I move back to the center of the pen and stand parallel to the mare’s hip. When I fix my eyes on hers, she trots on. I think I can turn her now; she has an ear on me but doesn’t turn when I step into her path. She keeps hearing things and pausing. I knew she was the churlish type. She’s not with me.

Koelle enters the pen and links arms



with me. I walk with her as she works the mare, feeling her smooth gestures and seeing the focused attention required to get a response. "Now you try," she says. It's better, but the buckskin still breaks contact with me to look away.

"Let's role-play," says Koelle. "I'll be you. You be her." All my life, I have secretly wished to be a horse, imagining the grace and speed that four legs would bring.

Self-conscious at first, I move away from my teacher. She holds my gaze more surely than I did the mare's, then tosses the line at me. It feels good to trot off under her friendly but firm attention. The buckskin watches us.

I hear a bang and stop to look up. Instantly, Koelle comes toward me, eyes and body demanding attention, pushing me on. At new sounds I halt, back up, look up and out. Koelle takes a big step toward me and tosses the line at my

butt, her raised eyebrows and wide eyes saying "Here! Stay with me!"—which also looks like "Boo!" I have done the same when longeing young horses, and now I feel from the other side how hard it is to ignore. I test and Koelle presses until I settle into a good walk in a small circle around her.

Trying again with the buckskin mare, I am more focused and fluid. She trots around, inside ear on me, never stopping or offering to turn before I ask. I see her lick her lips and watch her bow her head to the ground. As instructed, I walk an arc in front of her then back to her shoulder, spirit calm, head low, eyes down. I invite her to join me.

As the mare nosed my shoulder and sighed, Koelle said I had spooked at the outside sounds before the horse did. I rubbed the mare to apologize for having judged and blamed her for my own lack of skill.

Lesson Two: I judge myself and others too harshly. To provide intentional leadership, I must first connect with and honor myself.

Lesson Three: Communication is a two-way street, and I need to give it time to work.



Our last two are red chestnut geldings—a little fellow with friendly, buggy eyes and his fieldmate, who is wary and upright like a chessboard knight.

Horses don't speak English but respond to tone. "Come on, Handsome," I croon to Little Red as I do to my own gelding, Avraham. Around Koelle, I realize how much we at my barn talk to—and through—our horses, sending messages to an owner by speaking to her horse. Now I see that, while it is fine to talk to the horse in words he doesn't understand, it can preempt mindful interaction



in “Equus” body language.

I enter the round pen with Little Red and his short ears tune to me. Sending him off, I develop subtlety. If I push, he kicks out as if saying, “All right! I get it!”; he does the same if I get too close. When I correct my position and walk steadily behind his hip, his pace smooths. He tries several times to switch directions, but I anticipate and preempt him.

Little Red Joined Up quickly, so I tried out new “grammar” as he hugged my shoulder through circles and turns. If I turned too sharply, he stopped. Walking away too quickly on a straight line lost him too. Koelle said it meant I was leaving and he was not invited to come. So I circled back to rub his face; then one little tug on his halter got him to follow me again.

I invited him to jog with me. Looking over my shoulder to see if he was coming, I tripped. He ran off bucking. “Keep your own intention,” Koelle said as I dusted myself off. “Looking back at him won’t help.” I sent him around again until we were smooth, and then he spiraled in again. I was mispronouncing his language, but we were connecting.

A horse has almost a full circle of peripheral vision, but he can’t see anything in thin slices directly behind his tail and in front of his face. Rubbing Little Red’s forehead, one of the most vulnerable places on his body, I welled up with gratitude.

Lesson Four: You can’t listen when you’re talking. Express yourself—then give your partner time to respond. Let him show you how much emphasis you need.

Lesson Five: Follow your vision. Conduct inspired action. Other beings, of every species, will seek that calm, focused energy and follow you.



Our last horse, Mr. Chess Piece, had energy. When I sent him off, he cantered away tossing his head. The slightest gesture would turn him. I got more skilled as we went; our steps lightened and lengthened in synchrony. I put no effort into our play. I grinned at our immediate, shared grace. He was an equine sports car with a big beating heart.

“Very good,” Koelle said. “Now slow

I realize how much we at the barn
talk to—and through—our horses,
sending messages to an owner by
speaking to **her horse**.

your breathing and your walk.” I did that and he melted to my shoulder, stretched his head down in that lovely gesture, and worked his jaws. I threw my arms around him. “Where do you want to go from here?” Koelle said. “We can be done,” I replied, wanting to let it sink in that I had been able to “Join Up” with three new, untrained horses in so little time. I had learned, or relearned, how to just “be” with another being, how to communicate what I wanted and allow it to be freely given to me.

Koelle and I talked over the lessons of the day. Then I hugged her and thanked her and drove away.

Lesson Six: That “RIGOROUS” card may not be the only winner in the deck. Or: It can work wonders to set that “RIGOROUS” card aside.



My rental car churns dust on the washboard lane as I swell with sensations, insights and words to capture it all. There is no one behind me so I stop to make notes. Back on pavement, I am

entering a construction zone when my phone rings.

“Beth, this is Andy, is this a good time?” It is the president with the interim job. I am prepared to accept his offer, feel ready to tune up his programs—and now I have new tools with which to guide his scared, scattered staff. I know what I need from him to make it all work.

“Yes, this is great,” I say, keeping one eye on the road and holding the

phone with my shoulder as I dig in my bag for my acceptance script.

“Beth, we’ve made the offer to the other candidate, who has accepted.”

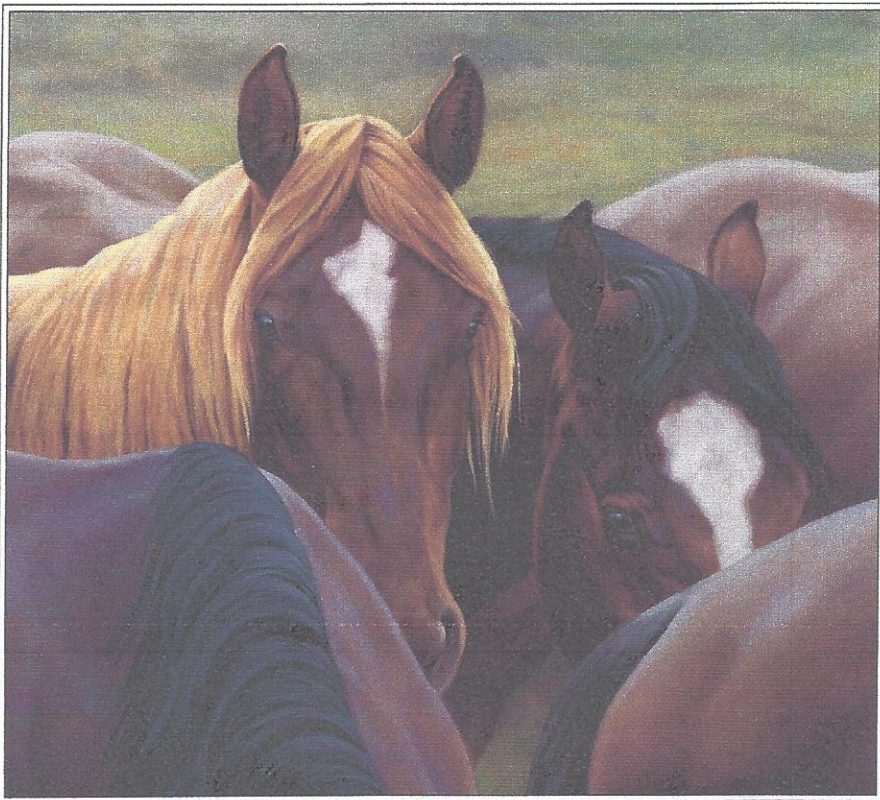
It is like falling off a horse: sudden, hard, breathtaking. Andy had personally convinced me to apply. My interview had gone fine. We had already discussed logistics as if this were a done deal.

I pull over, feeling faint. “Can you tell me why?”

“You were both very strong candidates. It was the consensus of the senior staff that the other candidate would be a more calm and reassuring presence for a rattled staff.” He went on to thank me and offer help in my search, but I barely heard him. I just thanked him and got off the phone.

Feelings blew in like weather, and I spiraled like a tumbleweed on desert wind. It was too much, a real-life, high-stakes indictment of my abilities as a matriarch mare. It didn’t seem fair. How could they decide I would not reassure a staff I had not even met? A proven, wise, humane manager, I would be the last one to drive someone else’s herd too hard or off a cliff. Either Andy got it wrong, or today’s message was that I

It was too much, a real-life, high-stakes indictment of my abilities as a **matriarch mare**.



"BLONDE MOMENT" MICHELLE GRANT

knew nothing about either horses or the work I've been doing for 25 years.

I buried my face in my hands and flooded the dry arroyo around me with disappointment and shame. My swirling self-criticism would resonate with anyone who has ever not gotten a job. Post-rejection thoughts come in many flavors, but they are all based on the one true vanilla: I am not good enough.

My lifelong, relentless need to be extraordinary is not working anymore. How many external judgments must I face before I can trust my vision and path?



Thank God my husband answered his phone. He was surprised and sorry, but quick to say that the decision reflected no failing in me. "It's not a place that wants an energizer right now," he said. I knew that was true. "They're not looking for big progress. You said

yourself that after the president laid out five tasks to be done in the next six months, you added five more. The right thing will find you." Boy, did I marry the right guy.

Back at the hotel, I sit on the bed in dusty jeans and stare out at the red rock piles that pass for mountains here. I try to hold in my mind these things that Koelle said:

- You are free in every situation.
 - Lead yourself. Stay present and peaceful without attachment to outcomes.
 - Remove damaging self-judgment, which is not the same as instructive feedback.
 - Let go of fears about money. I promise that intentional leadership will draw in what you need.
- I order a salad from room service and "Secretariat" on the movie channel. Resting my eyes on sprinting horses, I remember in sporadic mental

sunbreaks that I have interviews with three consulting firms next week. I resolve to bring the energy of the matriarch mare to those meetings, not that of the adolescent horse who balks at any perceived threat. I will stay in the moment and won't tell myself scary tales of my failings and fate. The air conditioner lulls me into a brief, fitful sleep.



The next morning, I head back to my uncertain life. Signs brag that Phoenix is "America's Friendliest Airport." Usually this would annoy me, but today, when my eyes burn with tears and exhaustion, it seems fine.

I walk down a long hallway past a raven-haired woman at a shoeshine stand. She eyes my dusty paddock boots, which do not match my nice luggage, dark-wash Calvins and cashmere top. "Shoeshine, Ma'am?" I shake my head no. I need to carry this desert round-pen dust with me for a while.

At security, a fragile, grizzled, soft-spoken gentleman scans my license with his little Maglite and checks my boarding pass. "Ooh, it's cold in Baltimore," he shudders. "I can't take the cold at my age." I look, really look, him in the eye. "Guess that's why you're here," I say.

"You bet," he smiles. "Is that your final destination?"

Gathering my things, I say softly, "I don't know."

Epilogue: As always, the horses brought me back to my true self. Not getting that vice presidency was a gift that expands every day as I build my consulting, coaching and teaching business—and as I complete training in March 2013 to become an Equus Coach. Ideal clients are finding me as I stride my new path in dusty boots. 🐾