

**First Place, 7-13**

Madeleine Davison, Wexford, PA, Age 13

**If My Appaloosa Were a Movie Star**

If I had an Appaloosa and that Appaloosa was a movie star, well...

"Cut! Cut! Cut!" The director cries, impatiently waving his arms at the cast. "Sandy, your horse is supposed to look like he's about to fall over the cliff. Not like a lazy horse snatching a bite of grass at the edge of a ravine. This is a western action movie, for Pete's sake! Dusty, you are a cowgirl, not a fashion model anymore. And yes," he adds quickly as the celebrity fashion model opens her mouth to correct him, "I am the director and I am going to call you 'Dusty'; it'll help you get into the spirit of things. Now let's try that scene again. Places everyone! And...ready...Action!"

The camera is rolling. Out of the distance comes a lovely blonde woman, her trim figure barely disguised even under layers of heavy leather and 'authentic' cowboy clothes. She rides atop a dashing palomino blanket Appaloosa whose golden spots are the exact same shade as her hair. She leans back and pulls him to a thrilling sliding stop as cries ring out from the gully. It's another cowgirl, and she's in trouble.

The blonde runs to the edge of the ravine leaving her trusty steed ground-tied a ways back. She reaches down (though nobody can see what she's doing- that'll be for the computer, later) and helps the brown-haired damsel in distress to climb out of the ravine and get onto her own horse, a flashy buckskin Quarter Horse (who, all this time, has not been looking the slightest bit interested in playing his part, but instead has been sampling the delicacies growing along the edge of the cliff).

The two gather up their authentic cowboy reins and, spurring their steeds, gallop off into the sunset.

The director looks pleased this time as the group gathers round. "Better, ladies," he says, "I believe that one day you may get it." He reaches over to rub the Appaloosa's head. "This young man has proved his worth. Only two years, six months old and he's standing ground-tied already! Well done, Leslie!"

The blonde woman smiles and looks bashfully at the ground. It seems as though the director has forgotten to call her the name of her character. "Well, let's go through that scene one more time, OK? Places! And...action!"

The scene replays itself. The brown-haired actress screams and pretends to fall over the edge of the cliff. Leslie rides in, ground-ties her Appaloosa, and runs over. Then something goes terribly wrong. Leslie trips, and real screams echo all around. Her fellow actress reaches out as she scrabbles for a handhold. Then something huge and golden sweeps past with a thundering noise. Huge teeth grasp hold of the authentic cowboy shirt and yank up. Leslie comes flying over the edge of the cliff, past the shelf where the brunette is standing, until a second ago pretending to need help, and past the lazy buckskin gelding who, for once, is not grazing but watching with an expression of mild interest on his face.

The Appaloosa drops his charge on the sandy desert ground and takes a step back as the crew comes rushing to her aid with water, Band-Aids and icepacks.

It is the spring of the next year. The director is standing up, receiving his award for the best western movie of the year. He is asked if he would like to make any acknowledgments. "Yes, in fact, I would," he says smiling at the crowd, "to Golden Man, our resident Appaloosa, for giving me the great idea for the plot twists that won me this award." He pats the trophy fondly. "He is a true example of an amazing equine actor. Not only is he handsome, quiet, smart and strong, but he is brave as all get-out." The director beams as the crowd erupts into delighted cheers. They have never heard anything like it before.

Years later, our friend Golden Man receives his own Oscar for best actor in a different great adventure movie. He is acclaimed by the press as "The finest Appaloosa movie star ever." And he is.

The End!