

There Once Lived a Horse Named



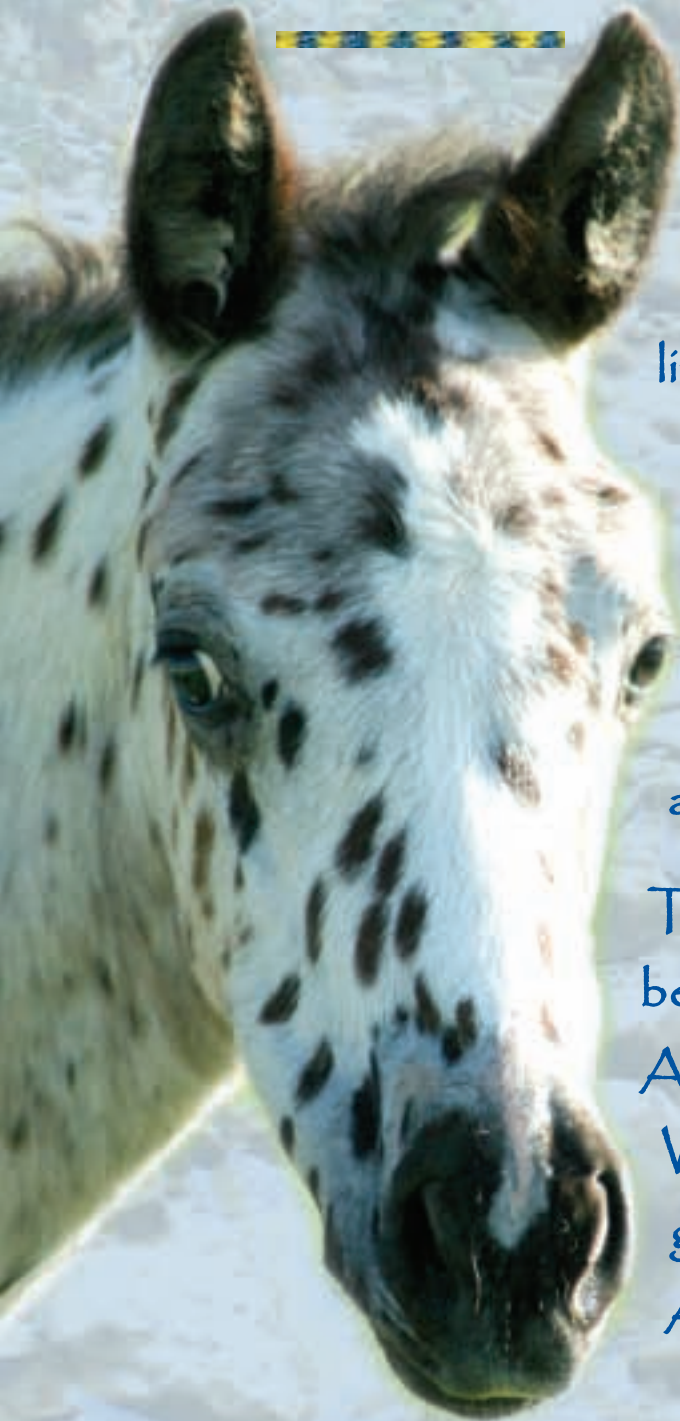
AYAT

By: Leah Juarez

In the year 1771, in what is now the state of Idaho, there once lived a horse named Ayat.

Ayat was an adventurous Appaloosa filly. A curious sort, she often – too often actually – wandered away from her mother and her herd.

The little spotted horse's herd belonged to a tribe of Native Americans called Nez Perce. Whenever the herd was lazily grazing, something always caught Ayat's attention and drew her away.



Wandering away from the herd was not a safe thing to do. Being separated from the herd made it easier for predators like **mountain lions** to catch her. Ayat wasn't worried though. When she strayed too far she would just close her eyes and nicker deep in her throat to alert her herd. Fearing danger, the horses would immediately stand at attention, heads held tall, and ears pricked in her direction. Ayat was lost again, they'd know, and together would whinny in chorus loudly so Ayat could find her way back.

One stifling summer day, Ayat strayed very far. She meandered upon a swift-flowing stream which slowed her afternoon stroll. As she drank from the crystal clear river, she quickly stood at attention, her head held tall, and ears pricked.

A **strange noise** had frightened her. It was coming from behind a colossal craggy rock pushing out from the river bank. It was a familiar sound, but Ayat couldn't quite place it. She was curious. She slowly approached the rock. She circled the boulder to see what was making the noise.

There sat a teary **little girl** from the Nez Perce tribe. She clung to her gathering basket. She was lost, afraid and crying for help. Ayat knew just what to do. The little filly closed her eyes and nickered deep in her throat. The girl looked up with a quick smile. She recognized the spunky spotted horse.

"Oh, Ayat!" she exclaimed. "I am so happy to see you! I was with my grandmother. We were gathering roots for the tribe to eat when I spotted a beautiful butterfly," she explained. "I chased after it, but it kept flying further away. When I stopped, I couldn't see Grandmother anymore." Ayat stomped her foot to reassure the petite girl.



"Oh, Ayat! I wandered off just like you always do, and now I can't find my way back," she said aloud as she began to see the danger they were still both in. "We are **not safe** here! We are not safe here at all," she gasped.

The girl scrambled up to Ayat and hugged her fuzzy neck. She dried her tears. "I'm so scared Ayat," she whispered. "Please help me get back to my tribe."

Ayat closed her eyes and nickered deep in her throat again, her head held tall, and ears pricked. The filly began walking away from the river.

"**Wait Ayat,**" the little girl pleaded. "I don't think that's the way." Ayat's ears were perked high but she still heard nothing from her herd. The other horses could not hear her. She had wandered too far this time. She kept walking. Ayat knew she had to find her own way home to safety this time. The little girl depended on it.

The little girl quickly snatched up her basket and followed the fuzzy filly. "Why are you going this way?" she asked. "**What do you hear?**" Ayat kept walking steadily, and nickered again. This time her head lifted tall and ears pricked. She heard horses. She heard their whinnying for her.

"The horses!" the girl shouted. "I hear them! Oh Ayat, you are wonderful but we must promise each other that we won't ever wander off again, okay?"

Ayat closed her eyes and nickered deep in her throat. Her head was held tall and ears pricked as she marched the lost little girl toward home.

