

The Hidden Valley

Camp Strachan, 2010

Meeting Silver

Once upon a time there were two boys who went on a vacation with their parents to a tropical land that had many trees and green fields. Playing beside the road near their house, their dog who was a German Shepherd started to chase a rabbit and disappeared into the underbrush that seemed to grow on the mountainside. The boys expected him to come right back out but when he didn't, they crawled into the underbrush.

To their surprise, they found a dark tunnel. They crawled in the dark for a long time, but then suddenly, they came out into a beautiful valley with trees climbing up the hillsides, a green pasture in the center and a stream running along right side. "Wow!" said one, "Look at that beautiful white stallion with his brown, black and spotted mares."

Just as he said this, the white stallion turned his head, cocked his ears and looked right at them. The boys smiled and waved at him. When he jumped back, they saw that he was limping. He started to herd the other horses away as if he was afraid of the boys, but the older one called, "Don't worry, we're here to help."

"You can talk", said the horse. "I didn't know that little boys could talk."

"We didn't know that horses could talk", answered the boys. "Actually," said the stallion, "I'm the only one that can---it's the way I protect my herd."

"What is your name?" asked the boys.

"People call me 'Silver' because I can run fast as the wind---though with this wound in my leg, I'm not running at all. I'm very afraid that I'm not going to be able to protect everyone from the wolves."

"What happened?" said the younger boy.

"I don't know," replied Silver.

"Can we take a look? Maybe we can help." They examined Silver's leg and found a big thorn sticking out of his ankle.

"Hold still" said the older boy. He took hold of the end of the thorn and jerked it out.

“Ouch!” said the stallion. “That hurt, but it really helped! My ankle feels a lot better, and I can walk again without limping. You are so smart and kind! Anytime you can come, I’ll give you a ride on my back.”

“Great!” chimed the boys. “Now though, we’d better get back home before my parents miss us.”

“Please don’t tell anyone about this valley,” said the stallion, “or people will come and capture my mares and hurt them..”

“Your secret is safe with us!” said the boys.

Attack of the Wolves

The next time the boys came through the tunnel and out into the hidden valley, they couldn’t find the herd of horses. Suddenly in the distance, they heard the terrible baying of wolves and the screams of the horses. Luckily they had brought a *machete*, which is the Spanish word for a long knife used to cut cane and grass. They had planned to cut hay for the herd since winter was coming.

Running down along the stream, they came around a bend to see the herd huddled in a small canyon. Silver was darting right and left trying to protect the colts from three big gray wolves that were attacking. One came dashing in from the left, another from the right and the third in the center.

It was clear that Silver could beat one wolf with his hooves, but with the three attacking from different directions, he could not defend the colts. He dashed back and forth, but it was clear he was very tired.

“How can we help him?” asked the younger boy. “I have an idea,” said the other. “The machete will only help us fight one wolf, but we can use it to cut down stakes and make spears--- then we can do it!”

So they quickly made two sharp spears and sneaked up on the wolves from behind. Then they flanked the stallion, one on his left and the other on his right. When a wolf charged, the boys would thrust their spears, forcing the wolf to swerve to the center where the stallion used his hooves to kick them in the head and ribs. Using this strategy, two of the wolves were completely knocked out, and the third wolf ran away, realizing he was going to get his butt kicked!

“Whew!” said the stallion, “You came just in time. I don’t think I could have lasted another minute. Thanks so much. I promised you a ride, but I’m exhausted right now.”

“That’s fine,” said the boys, “we are going to cut down some juicy hay and sugar cane for all of you to eat, then we have to go home. We’ll take our ride next time!”

The Beavers Dam

In previous chapters of *The Hidden Valley* you've heard about two boys who, on a vacation to a tropical country, discovered a hidden valley and helped a white stallion named Silver protect his mares and their colts from an attack of wolves.

The next year the boys returned to this tropical country and the house in which they'd had their vacation. This time though, it was the rainy season. One morning when it was raining, they had to stay indoors. They played with their Legos and read books, but after a while, they were both bored and restless. Since the rain in this country wasn't cold like the winter rain where they lived, the boys asked their mother if they could go out and play.

"Yes," she told them, "But put on your old clothes and old tennis shoes . It doesn't matter if they get wet."

They decided to visit the hidden valley. They crawled through the tunnel, carrying the machete just in case the wolves were back. When they got to the valley, it was raining even harder and the little stream that ran down the right side of the valley had become a swollen river.

The herd of mares and colts was huddled together near the river trying to get out of the fierce wind. Milling around, they bumped and jostled one another. Suddenly one of the colts who had been shoved lashed out at another. As they butted heads, they moved closer and closer to the flooded river. In a flash, the colt the boys called Benjamin was caught in the roiling water and carried downstream.

"Help me!" yelled Silver, catching sight of the boys.

"Quick!" said the older boy. "Give us a ride. Gallop down past Benjamin."

The boys leaped onto Silver's back. " Both grasped the stallion's mane, remembering what they'd learned about riding horses the previous summer. Silver galloped down the valley alongside the stream, past the colt who was struggling to keep his head above water.

They came to a bend in the stream and saw a large branch of an old oak tree hanging out over the water. The younger boy climbed out onto the branch while the older one cut a hanging vine that could serve as a rope. He threw the end of it to his brother on the branch, and just then, the rushing current carried the colt around the bend.

"Grab the vine with your teeth!" yelled the boys, and the colt did it! As he hung on for dear life, the boy pulled the vine toward the shore, hoping to tow him into shore.

However the branch was wet and slippery, and current was very strong. Instead of pulling Benjamin to the shore, the younger boy got jerked off the branch and fell into the stream on top of the colt. Both were swept downstream.

“Keep your head up, Asa!” yelled the older one. “We’ll get you out!”

Fortunately Asa knew how to swim. He got beside Benjamin and helped him keep his head above water. It took a lot of strength to keep afloat and avoid the big rocks.

Meanwhile, his brother, vine in hand, climbed on Silver’s back, and they tore downstream trying to find a place where they could rescue the two before they drowned. Suddenly they came upon a group of beavers who were wringing their hands and jabbering at each other.

“What are they saying?” asked Zephyr because he didn’t speak Beaver.

“They’re saying the river is washing away their dam and houses,” said the stallion, “and they don’t know what to do. Their babies are in the houses, and so is all their food.”

“Tell them, that we’ll help them if they’ll help us,” said Zephyr. “Ask them to take this end of the vine out to the middle of the stream and give it to Asa and the colt. We’ll tie the other end around your neck and you can pull them out. Maybe they can also help push Benjamin and Asa through the water to the edge. The current is weaker there, and they can probably stand up and get out.”

Well, that’s just what the beavers did, and in the nick of time! Both Benjamin and Asa were exhausted from fighting the heavy waters.

As soon as the rescue was done, everyone began to focus on saving the beavers’ homes. The boys used the machete to cut staves and vines that the beavers used to reinforce the dam and their homes. It was nip and tuck, but finally, the rain let up, and the river began to subside. Both the dam and houses were still standing.

Baby beavers poured out of the houses, laughing instead of scared and crying. They hugged their parents and the little boys and even the colt who finally stopped shaking and began to feel proud that he’d kept his head up and not drowned.

As they were leaving, the head beaver came to the boys and jabbered something. The stallion translated, “We are deeply grateful for your help. Please come visit us again. We wish to learn English and we will be happy to teach you Beaver.”

“We will,” chorused the boys, “but right now we have to get home and change out of these wet clothes.”

“I’ll give you a ride back to the entrance,” said the stallion. The little colt galloped alongside. Just as the boys were getting ready to go back into the tunnel, he gave each one a big wet nuzzle. They knew they’d made a friend for life.