

Dangerous Jade 2

When I was three years old, my father asked me what I wanted for Christmas. "A pony, Daddy!", was my reply. Now, I had never even seen a horse, but that's what I wanted and went on wanting all the rest of my life. I'm sure I broke my father's heart, tearfully begging year after year for something that he couldn't afford to buy me, but after five years of asking he broke down and bought me a horse named Star, which we kept in my grandmother's back yard. Star was a good example of why you should know something about horses prior to buying one. He was nuts. I would go into the corral to halter him and he'd rear up, lifting me in the air while I grimly hung on, determined to saddle and ride him. Star would run headlong into a tree at full gallop, squish my brother against the barn wall (this I didn't mind too much!) and generally engaging in self-destructive habits. Of course, I did learn how to ride, since I didn't want to fall off while going 35 MPH. Eventually, though, my father saw how dangerous Star was and got rid of him.

Well, Star was just the first of my horsey menagerie. When I was twelve we moved to an acreage in the Iowa countryside. Before we moved in, my dad took me into the house and showed me a tiny cubicle that had been the laundry room - no closet, only room for a twin bed and a small bureau.

"Do you think you could live in here?" my father asked.

"Can I have a horse?"

"Yes."

"I'll manage."

Misty was my next horse, but I should have named her Houdini. She could escape from any stall, remove any halter or bridle and even detach a snap from beneath her chin. Luckily, like all horses, she was ruled by her stomach, so all it took to catch her was a bucket of oats. I sold Misty to an unsuspecting little girl and the next season bought Jinx.

Jinx was an Appaloosa gelding and the best horse ever. He'd do anything I asked except walk through a puddle or canter in a full circle. No, I don't know why he had those phobias. Through many lazy summer days I laid on him backwards while he grazed, propping my head on my arms on his butt and reading a SF book. To this day, the smell of a horse relaxes me and cheers me up.

Now I have Vegas, a sly and crafty older Arabian. He's spooky and silly, gorgeous and arrogant. He loves to be scratched and to race like the wind and when nobody's watching he likes to have his head cradled against my chest while I croon sweet love words in his ear. Why did my love for horses last when so many other little girls' dreams of horses died? I guess I just met the right horses.

I have a cat named T. Kettle Bubbles, but that's not really her name
Her name is Tammy or Blue Eyed Menace or Cattitude (for such is her fame)

I have a cat and I know that I have her from all the grey hairs on my slacks
Tammy is fractious, demanding, insistent. English is all that she lacks

She jumps in my arms, on my bed and my head, and she cries with a banshee's wail
She walks like a queen with twelve books on her head and solemnly swishes her tail

She weighs just five pounds on the scale in the kitchen, except when sleeps on my back
Then she's immovable, heavy and cranky. If disturbed then her mood's foul and black

When Tammy was young, she would jump in the air with the ease of an acrobat clown
Grab onto my hand and swing back and forth before leaping back down to the ground

She would race through the house with sheer kitten delight and happy shred toilet paper
Jump onto the bureau and kick off my trinkets, or cut other kittenish capers

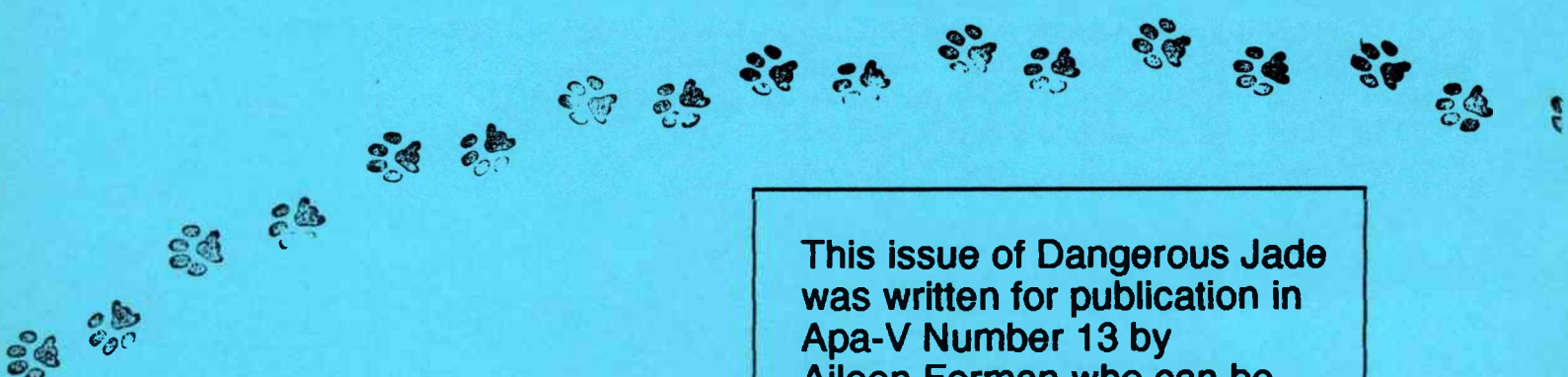
She slept on my chest and she'd bath me for hours with a tongue as rough as a file
And gaze in my eyes with a dreamy expression then curl up to sleep for a while

She'd touch my eyelids with her velvet pad to try to catch my blink
And turn on the faucet with a clever paw to get a little drink

Well, now she's older and sicker, I fear, and she's slowed down quite a bit
Though her eyes are still blue and her fur still as sleek, she's not quite as dapper and fit

And I catch myself crying when I think of the day that my arms will be empty and cold
Deprived of the love and the warm friendship of *Tamara - the brave and the bold*

Tammy - I'll never forget you and I could never replace you. You were my friend when
my soul desperately needed one, my baby when I lost my own, my companion and guard,
my confidant. Of all the animals I've ever known, you were the most...human.



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