Companionship with Horses

Most of us have memories of a time when as children we freely conversed with nature. As lifelong companions horses have been my primary teachers in the active re-membering of a language that communicates through gestures, rhythms, images and the symbolic. Through the horses I reclaim a primal part of myself and feel the renewal of a deep connection and love for the world I live in. Since my training at the Tamalpa Institute, I have come to appreciate art as the process that keeps me engaged in a body to body attunement with natural cycles and of service to the earth.

It is from a place of deep gratitude for all my teachers and for the future to come that I share here a fragment of my dance with horses.
Through my back I feel a gaze from the other side of the aisle. The oldest mare of the herd is staring, requesting attention. So I step over to the left side of her door where we engage in this spontaneous silly head/neck dance... looking towards, looking away I feel like I am clowning around. As the space between me and you settle I put my hand behind your ear; the delicate softness that covers your sturdy bones shifts my mischievous mood and my hand flows around the contours of your face shaping a new distance between you and me.

You close your eyes .......................... I notice I am holding my left arm stiffly against my body.
............................................ I feel tears swelling up from deep inside
............................................ I lean against the door sill
You open your eyes & look at me,
............................................ with my left hand I stroke the right side of your face
You move back into your stall,
............................................ I follow you in. Tears are streaming down my face.
............................................ I reach into my pocket and pull out an old crumpled tissue
You quickly step back, raise your neck, your body is rigid your eyes wide open,
............................................ I notice this gesture scarred you
............................................ I know you were mistreated when you were young, so long ago
............................................ I imagine you think I will hit you
You look at me .......................... both my arms are quiet along my body, I notice they are numb
You look away .......................... I look away
You look towards me .......................... I look towards you
You look at me .......................... I look away
You look at me .......................... I am feeling playful

We repeat this movement a few times
You seem curious; you extend your neck and bring your head up and down
............................................ I mirror and follow your movement
Neck down extended you look at me
............................................ head/neck bent forward I look at you
Neck down extended you look at me
............................................ head/neck forward draws spine into forward flexion
............................................ I look at the ground pulling myself in. I get the image I am a very very sad clown
............................................ I am aware of the expression on my face like a white painted downward smile; "There is a child who plays it to small"
Neck down extended you look at me
............................................ in forward flexion I feel my arms hanging
............................................ I unroll slowly into hyper-extension lifting my forearms with my palms up
............................................ I look up & imagine the sky through the ceiling and hear: "Help"
You look at me .......................... both my arms are quiet along my body, I notice they are numb
You turn your head towards me
........ I am standing straight and look at you:
"I am so so sorry this happened to you"
........ my hands extending towards you in offering gesture,
........ I stand upright relaxed
You lick your lips, chew and start eating some hay
........ I pick up some hay with my 2 hands
........ I am looking at the hay in my hands
You take a step forward turn your head/neck towards me stretching slightly you gently take a few strands of hay, for a moment we are connected by these dried green threads that feed you
You are eating a few strands of hay
........ I pick up some hay and really feel it's texture
........ I bring it up to my nose and strangely there is a fresh fragrance crackling from last fall's dry twigs
You do not seem interested in me anymore
........ I make myself smaller and smaller, pulling myself in and folding my lateral space inward,
........ extending my hand with a gift of hay to you I squeeze myself close to the door and say "I just want to be your friend, take this, I ask for nothing more, promise I ask for nothing more"
You look at me still chewing your head is slightly above the ground
........ I turn my body towards the door holding my right arm out behind my back
........ I am still holding the handful of hay, "Promise, I just want to be your friend"
For some reason neither of us are moving, I lost track of time
........ close to the door almost facing the wall, still holding my hand out behind my back I feel myself soften at the knees and I let myself slowly drop to the ground
You are still looking at me
........ I am sitting curled up on myself the middle of your hay
You extend your neck and ever so softly take the hay out of my hand
........ I feel moved and blessed and as I watch you chew I feel like a stream of sparkling and tickling movement around my heart and up the right side of my sternum.
........ I feel my weight relax into the floor
You take a small step and start eating nibbling here and there around me
........ "I have not shared a meal with another in a long time, I eat alone
........ the streaming around my heart is moving through my chest.
........ I close my eyes
........ I listen to your chewing. The space between us has become so palpable and soft almost spongy.
........ I feel a warm breeze on my cheek
I imagine the last rays of sunlight.

I notice there is a soft rhythm to the breeze curious I open my eyes and realize you are standing there about 5 feet away your eyes half closed and through the stillness I feel your breath on my skin. It is dusk I am basking in white light and slip out the door to the other side walking past a few other horses

I come to the end stall where I see one of the stallions tied to the wall to cool down his supper is on the ground just a few feet away out of reach

"He was a bad boy today"

I am told ,"This is good for him".

My heart is racing I am not sure what planet I am walking on through the rhythm in my legs I feel You a not so quiet clown moving inside out I hear 6 feet 2 beats a tail-tale behind me a childlike tree grows crisscrossing rock heart between me looking at you looking at me slowly curving back towards the sky holding hands with the invisible
Andree Baillargeon is an interdisciplinary artist, Reiki Master/Teacher and equestrian. Her passion for horses and constant desire to learn has lead her to study various movement practices such as Feldenkrais, Authentic Movement and Spatial Dynamics. Andree is a movement based expressive arts graduate from the Tamalpa Institute and is now writing a book entitled “Horses Carry the Wounded Home”. Using the Tamalpa Life-Art process as corner stone, this book relates her journey of personal transformation and creates a map for anyone interested in the field of equine facilitated learning. Andree can be reached through email at inspiredconnections@gmail.com.