

AUTHOR'S FOREWORD

A few years ago, long after this book was written, I was in the barn area at Churchill Downs the morning after a filly, Genuine Risk, won the 1980 Kentucky Derby. With me was a friend who asked, "How did you know she'd win? A filly hasn't won the Derby since Regret in 1915. That's a long time in the record books."

"Sixty-five years," I said. "Once in a lifetime a filly may come along like her, one fast enough, strong enough to beat three-year-old colts and geldings in the Kentucky Derby. That's the way it was with Black Minx, too."

"You and your storybook horses," my friend laughed. "But if that's the way you pick winners, it's okay with me."

Yes, my storybook horses have been very much a part of my life. And while I've spent most of my time writing about fiery stallions in the Black Stallion and the Island Stallion books, I must admit that closest to my heart have been the fillies and mares I've known on the racetrack and at home. Ruffian, the famous racehorse of the seventies, most closely resembled the Black Stallion of my stories. She was a magnificent filly whose speed, conformation and courage matched her massive size. Tragically, she died at the pinnacle of her success, but all who saw her will remember her.

Most fillies are more unpredictable than colts and geldings, but they are always challenging. So it is with this first daughter of the Black Stallion. Even her name, Black Minx, was not easy to come by.

I recall wanting a very special name for her, knowing this filly would have a feisty disposition and a certain look in her large, rare eyes that meant trouble for those who would attempt to break her to saddle, bridle and rider. Finally, I decided that I would ask my readers to name her, and to the boy or girl who submitted the most appropriate name I offered an Arabian yearling I had at home. Since I knew the winner might not be able to afford the care of such a horse, I offered as alternate prize a year's riding lessons at any accredited riding academy of his or her choice. I was to be the sole and final judge of *all* entries.

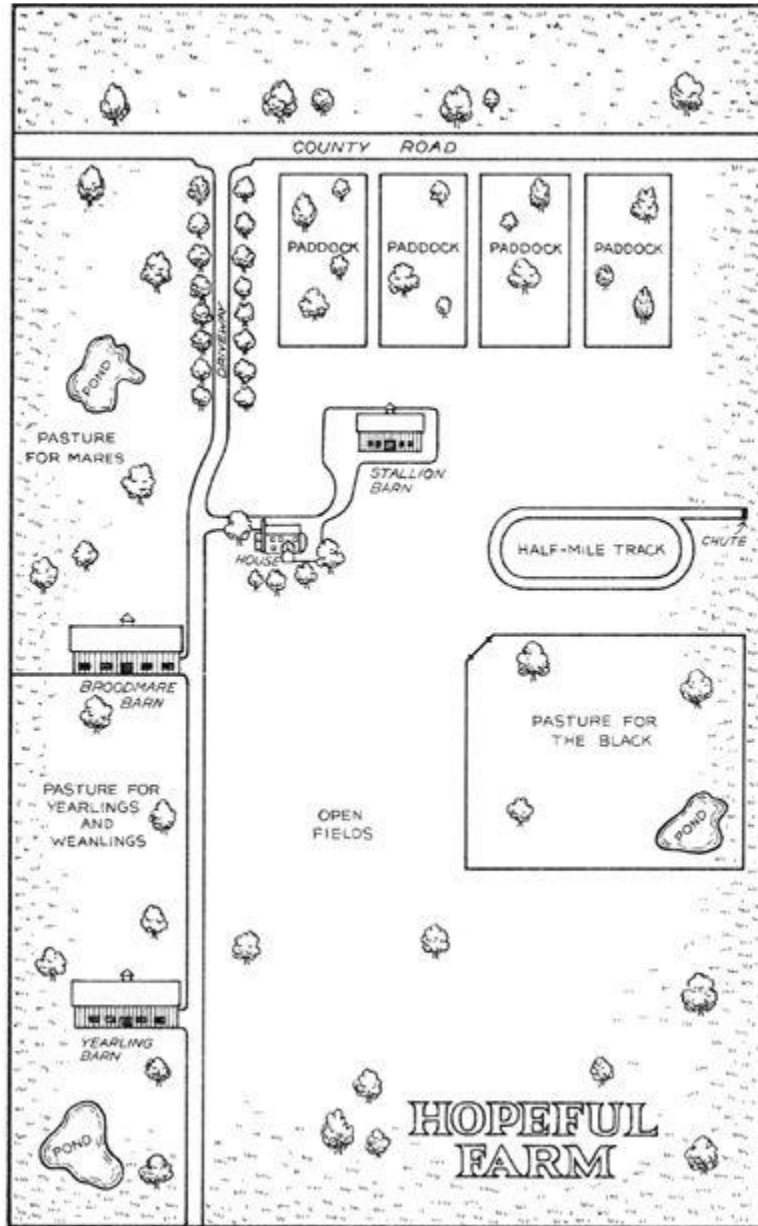
Needless to say, I didn't realize what I'd undertaken. Before the contest ended I had received well over one hundred thousand entries and regretted there could be only one winner, one horse for so many.

The winning name, Black Minx, was submitted by (wouldn't you know) a girl, Janice Ohl of Dayton, Ohio. She took the horse!

WALTER FARLEY, 1983

Editor's Note: Since 1983, only one additional filly has won the Kentucky Derby. In 1988, Winning Colors became only the third filly to win the Derby since the first Run for the Roses in 1875.

For Paula Turner, who first read this book as a young girl, and whose dream came true.



HOPEFUL FARM

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The following sports column written by Jim Neville appeared in newspapers throughout the United States on November 14.

Farewell, Satan

This is an obituary. There are two reasons why you read it here rather than in the special section which this newspaper devotes to the deceased. Number one, my subject is a horse. Number two, he isn't dead yet.

But for me and the millions of others whose sole contact with our racing thoroughbreds is at the track he's as good as dead. For once a racehorse leaves us to spend the rest of his life in retirement at a stock farm he's gone forever as far as we're concerned. Certainly we think of him again whenever his sons and daughters appear on the track for the first time. But his colts and fillies are distinct individuals in themselves and we look upon them as such. Never do we say with any degree of honesty, "*Here he is again!*"

So it was with sincere sympathy and sadness that we watched Satan step onto the Belmont Park track yesterday for his last look around before being shipped home to Hopeful Farm in permanent retirement.

Satan, sired by the Black, had a racing career that was much too short for one who had so much speed yet to give. He was unbeaten at two, three and four years of age, winning some of our greatest classics. Last season he lost only one race, the San Carlos Handicap at Santa Anita Park, California, in December. He ran that race, we learned later, with a stone pounded deep inside his right forefoot. Yet he wouldn't quit. Although he was running on only three legs it took a photo finish for Night Wind to beat him to the wire in race record time!

X-ray photographs taken after the race disclosed a fractured sesamoid, one of the small bones in the ankle. The injured leg was put in a cast and Satan was shipped home. We were sure that he had reached the end of his racing career. But during the spring encouraging reports reached us. The injured leg had healed and Henry Dailey was putting Satan back in training. By summer the burly black horse was stabled at Belmont Park, and during his works he looked as powerful as we all remembered him. But Henry Dailey wasn't satisfied. He took Satan along slowly, never asking too much of him, never quite ready to race him. Only last month did Henry step up Satan's works. And then the great horse went sore again in the injured leg. Last week it was decided that to prevent further injury Satan would be retired permanently.

Yesterday, at the insistence of the track management, Satan took his last look around Belmont Park—the scene of so many of his brilliant wins. And for the

thousands who packed the stands, it was a sad but thrilling moment when he came out of the paddock gate between the seventh and eighth races.

The weight of a rider might have aggravated his injury at this time, so he was led out by Henry Dailey, riding Hopeful Farm's gray stable pony, Napoleon. As Satan pranced there was no evidence of the leg injury that had brought his racing days to an end. He stepped lightly and a little faster at the crowd's first and most thunderous ovation. He looked very beautiful and very gay with black and white ribbons braided into his mane. He was the picture of health and energy. That he could look as he did and yet be able to race no more accounted for the wealth of feeling which moved so deeply all who watched him.

As Henry Dailey led him up the track to the far turn and then back down past the stands again, the track announcer told of Satan's achievements. But I don't believe anyone really listened. They knew all there was to know about Satan. They listened only to the beat of his hoofs as he loped beside Napoleon. And they most probably remembered—as I did—his hard-driving, blazing stretch runs down this very same track in other years.

He stood perfectly still while they took pictures of him near the paddock gate and the track band played "Auld Lang Syne." His black body glistened in waves of supple muscle. Neither the photographers, the shouts from the crowd, nor anything else bothered him or caused him to move one step from Napoleon's side. He was the picture of everything a well-trained racehorse should be.

I noticed that his hardened old trainer, Henry Dailey, blew his nose countless times. But I don't think Henry had a cold any more than I did, and I was blowing my nose too.

Finally, Satan was led away and the applause of the crowd moved with him. His last curtain call was over. For me and for most of those who have been privileged to watch him race he is gone forever.

Farewell, Satan.

At Hopeful Farm, Alec Ramsay put down the newspaper. He carefully clipped the sports column, placing it in the center of the huge desk before him. Henry would want to keep it in Satan's bulging scrapbook. Season after season Henry had carefully and wisely trained and raced Satan. Time and time again he had said that Satan was the greatest horse ever to set foot on any track. The world had said so, too. And Henry had cut pictures and stories of Satan from countless newspapers and magazines. He had made Satan a champion who stood majestically on top of the world—and Henry had been right up there with him.

Now it was over. Satan was coming home. Henry was coming home.

"But it's not the end for Satan at all," Alec said to himself. "It's just the beginning, really. He'll sire colts and fillies as great as he was."

Rising from the deep-cushioned chair behind the desk, Alec walked to the window. As he crossed the room, numerous objects hanging on the walls of the office caught his eye. They were bronze plaques which had been awarded to Satan in years past. The great horse had showed his heels to the best animals on the track. None of them could hold a candle to him. None could outstay him. None could outsprint him.

Maybe Satan would be glad to quit the track, to forget forever the chunks of earth flying in his face, blinding him as he made his move from behind the front runners. Maybe so. But how about Henry? Could he give it all up, even for a short time?

At the window Alec looked out upon the large empty paddocks between the stallion barn and the county road. The morning sun was unusually hot for the middle of November, and he could feel its warmth through the glass. He opened the window, then strode across the office and went out the door.

He stood in the wide corridor of the stallion barn. He sniffed deeply the scents he loved, the smells of well-oiled leather and soap and hay and manure. He listened to the sound of the Black rustling his straw. Finally Alec moved again, walking past the light and airy box stalls, all empty save one.

He stopped before the end stall. The heavy oak door was closed but he could see the Black through the iron-barred windows. Quickly Alec opened the door and went inside the stall.

This was the boss, the great sire of Satan. The stallion stood in the rays of the sun which came through the large top window to the rear of his stall; his black coat caught and reflected the brightness of the morning.

“Hi, fellow,” Alec said. “Let’s go outside.”

The Black stood with his head high in an attitude of conscious grandeur. But then he neighed and pushed his nose into Alec’s chest with the playfulness of a very young colt. The boy scratched the soft muzzle, even pulled the long tongue whenever it emerged from the stallion’s mouth. It was one of the games they played.

As Alec snapped the lead shank to the halter, he spoke softly. “They’re coming back today. Satan and Napoleon and Henry. It’s going to be like old times again.”

The stallion pulled against the lead shank, anxious to leave his stall. Alec didn’t keep him waiting. They moved quickly onto the wooden floor of the barn’s entryway and then out through the end door into the sunshine.

Going past the paddocks toward the Black’s own field a quarter of a mile away, Alec kept the stallion at a walk. Yet the boy was constantly aware of the flicking of the small ears, the burst of energy that would explode like a giant firecracker the moment he turned the Black loose in the field. Alec continued talking to him but never forcing him. Ask him nicely and the Black would do what he wanted. Try to push him around or force him and it would be all off. There never had been a battle of wills between him and the Black; there never would be.

The half-mile training track lay directly ahead of them, and Alec led the stallion to the fenced field to the right of it. Here the Black had ten acres for his very own.

Reaching the fence gate, Alec opened it. There was no holding the stallion now; all he wanted was to be set free.

“Easy, boy. Easy,” Alec said, turning him loose.

The Black lunged and bolted across the field, his head held high, his body stretched out with tail fanning the wind. Alec watched him until he disappeared down the hillside.

Even Satan couldn't match his speed, he said to himself, *now or ever.*

But no one knew, not even Henry. The Black had raced just once, long ago. Most people had forgotten him just as they'd forget Satan in time. Next year there would be another horse which would win the acclaim of racegoers and newspapers and magazines. But here, at Hopeful Farm, life would go on pretty much as always for the Black and himself, for the mares and foals.

Alec returned to the stallion barn but didn't go inside. Instead he stood before it, his gaze moving to the three mares in the rolling pasture across the driveway. They were all in foal to the Black and in the months to come might produce a colt or a filly as great as he had been.

Beyond the broodmare barn was still another fenced field and in the distance he could see the mares' three weanlings at play. All were colts. Next January they'd be yearlings, and the following year they would be preparing to race as two-year-olds. Henry would be most happy then, for he would have complete charge of their training. But what would Henry do between now and then with no Satan to race? He could perform endless chores on the farm but he wouldn't be happy away from the track. He had spent too many years training to be content taking care of the mares and their youngsters.

The great rumbling of a truck interrupted Alec's thoughts. It was coming along in the distance, its ponderous size claiming the county road for its very own. Alec smiled when he saw it. Nothing but the best for Satan, he thought. Henry had hired a six-horse van to bring Satan and Napoleon home.

Alec started for the paddock gate. He knew that Henry would have the van stop there. And Satan would be allowed to run for a while to get the kinks out of his legs after his trip.

The van turned carefully into the driveway, its high roof striking the branches of the low-hanging trees which grew on either side. As it came closer, Alec could make out the faces of the two men in the cab and he knew that Henry, as always, was back in the van with his horses. Finally the truck came to a stop. The top half of the side door was already open and Henry's white head emerged as he shouted directions to the drivers. He waved to Alec, then disappeared within.

The two men left the cab to help Alec lower the wooden gangplank from the door of the van to the ground.

“Easy trip?” Alec asked them.

“Never easy with Henry,” one said. “He treats his horses better than their own mothers would. But we’re used to him by now.”

“He won’t let us go over thirty at any time,” the other said. “An’ we always have to hog the road, riding the crown, so as not to jostle ’em.”

The first man nodded in agreement. “Anyone tryin’ to pass us always has a job. But Henry don’t care how mad they get just so long as his horses ride easy.”

Henry appeared in the doorway holding Napoleon by the halter. His eyes were fixed on the heavy fiber mat which lay on the ramp. “Y’sure you got that mat tight? I don’t want any slipping.”

“It’s fast. We checked it twice,” one of the drivers said patiently.

“Alec, you better check it. Make sure.”

“Okay, Henry.”

“Now come up and take Napoleon down.”

“Yes, Henry.”

Moving up the ramp, Alec took the gray horse by the halter and rubbed his muzzle. “Hi, boy,” he said. “It’s good to see you.”

Henry stood on the other side of Napoleon. He wore his battered hat and his brow was wet with sweat. “You take him to the second paddock, then come back an’ help me with Satan.”

Alec smiled. “You take it easy now, Henry. You’re home. Everything is all right.”

Henry’s gray eyes, still so very worried, met his young friend’s for the first time. “I just don’t want him to hurt himself getting down.”

“He won’t and you know it. You never saw a horse so easy to load and unload as Satan.”

Henry’s gaze dropped. “Yeah,” he said. “But get along with you now.”

Fat and well groomed, but his back sagging with old age, Napoleon whinnied as Alec led him through the van’s door. His hoofs came down on the matting calmly and deliberately, his step like that of an old gentleman leaving his favorite club. He whinnied again when he saw the familiar paddocks and barns, and moved a little faster.

When Alec returned to the van, Henry had Satan in the doorway.

“Alec, you check that mat again. Napoleon might have loosened it some.”

Resignedly the two men stepped away from the ramp while Alec went over it again. “It’s fast, Henry,” he said finally.

Satan stood quietly at Henry’s side with only his large eyes showing any evidence of his excitement at being home. His fiery gaze followed Napoleon as the gray horse moved ponderously about the second paddock.

Henry was talking to Satan, moving him onto the ramp. The horse never hesitated. He walked as carefully, as deliberately, as had Napoleon.

Henry wiped his wrinkled brow when he had Satan safely on the ground, then he turned to the two men. “Slim,” he said, “you an’ Harry stick around a few more

minutes before you go. I want you two up at the far end of the paddock when I set him loose. I want you to wave him down if he works up too much speed. Don't let him run into the fence an' hurt himself."

"Sure, Henry," one driver said, shrugging his shoulders. "We got time since you're payin' for it."

When the men had left for the far end of the paddock, Henry turned to Alec. "You and I will stay at this end. We can't be too careful, y'know."

"No, we can't," Alec agreed. He knew Satan was well able to take care of himself in the paddock but he couldn't smile—not with Henry's eyes, full of concern, boring into his own.

A few minutes later, Henry led the great champion through the paddock gate and set him free.

"You get down the fence a piece," Henry told Alec. "Don't let him hurt himself."

Alec moved along the fence, watching Satan as he galloped up the field. The horse was stretching out but had full control of himself. Satan was smart enough not to run into any fence even though it was his first outdoor frolic in a long while. It would take only a few minutes for him to become accustomed to freedom again. Alec saw the two men at the far end of the pasture raise their hands, waving down Satan as he neared the fence. The horse turned and came back, snorting joyously at Napoleon in the next paddock.

Alec watched Satan in full gallop. As the horse neared, the boy raised his hand a little, more to pacify Henry than to keep the horse from running into the fence. Satan went past, galloped across to Henry, then went up the paddock again.

Alec's eyes continued to follow him, but now he was comparing Satan with his sire.

His head is much heavier and larger than the Black's. He pushes it out when he's galloping, while the Black 'most always runs with a high head. Satan's neck is shorter and more muscular. And his body is so heavy that it gives you the feeling of grossness. But when he stretches out, as he's doing now, you forget his great bulk and see only the beauty of his coordination. He's like the Black in many ways, but very different in others.

A short while later, when Satan had settled down and was moving quietly about the paddock, Henry let the drivers go. Now he stood beside Alec at the fence, just watching his horse.

"It's not Satan I'm worried about," Alec said after a while. "I know he's glad to be back. But what are *you* going to be like—without a horse to get ready for next season's races?"

"You don't need to worry about me none."

Alec tried to catch his friend's eye. But Henry kept following Satan's every movement.

"Are you going to be happy helping me around here?" Alec asked.

"Sure."

“I’m not so sure,” Alec said. “You’re not much of a stock-farm man.”

“I got Satan to look after.”

“But it won’t be the same for you. You won’t be getting him ready for any races.”

“No, I won’t,” Henry said glumly. He glanced quickly toward the far pasture where the weanlings played, then back to Satan. “By this time next year I’ll start getting those fellows ready.”

“But in the meantime?” Alec asked.

Henry shifted his weight against the fence, then pushed himself upright with a thrust of his shoulder. “Would you think I was nuts if I told you I wanted to buy a horse to race next spring?”

Alec smiled. “No, I wouldn’t. It’s more what I expected you to say.” He paused, running his hand around the collar of his tight turtleneck sweater. “We’ve got the farm paid off, and all the bills for the new barns, the fencing, and the training track have been paid. Dad showed me the books the other night. We don’t owe anybody, and there’s enough money left over for running expenses and for buying another horse if you know of a good one, Henry.”

The trainer pushed back his hat. “No, I wasn’t figuring it that way, Alec. I don’t want to use the farm’s money. We’ll need every cent of it to pay expenses for the next couple of years. If Satan was racing, we wouldn’t have to worry about a thing. But since he isn’t we got to be careful about every penny we spend.”

“Then what are you driving at, Henry?”

“I got a little money saved. I thought I’d go to the Kentucky fall sales next week and maybe find a horse I like at a price I can afford to pay. Maybe I’ll be lucky and get a good one. But I don’t want to take a chance with the farm’s money—not with all the broodmares we still need to buy before we get a good band together. I’ll do this on my own or not at all.”

“Go ahead then, Henry, if that’s what you want to do.” Alec was watching Satan stretch his head across the fence. “Do you have any particular horse in mind?”

“No, I guess not. They’ll probably all go too high for me. If I want ’em, so will somebody else with more money to spend. Still, there’s one I just might ...” Henry stopped. His gaze was on Satan too, but he was not following the horse’s movements.

“Yes?”

“Remember our first few months here, long before we had any mares of our own?”

“Sure, Henry.”

“Do you remember a mare by the name of Elf, sent to us by a Doctor Chandler of Lexington, Kentucky? She was bred to the Black.”

“A dark-brown mare on the small side,” Alec answered. “She always came out of the barn on her toes. Yet she was level-headed; nothing upset her, not even the Black. She was a big little mare.”

“You remember good,” Henry said.