

# Where did Shadow go?

by John K. Babb

Her nicker had become a familiar and welcome sound each morning as she greeted me at feeding time. Her voice called out to me the second I stepped into the cool moist morning and began each day by feeding my animals. She was the first horse I had ever owned and each of the six foals she had labored into this world, pleased me so, I had kept them all but one. The three month old filly by her side was the only one that wasn't spotted, (or a long eared mule), and was the most special for she was a solid charcoal black with not a single detail to distinguish her from her mother, Shadow.

Shadow was near twenty and had the heaves for several years at this point. She was smart and loved to eat which was not to her benefit. Several months before, she had opened the latch on the feed room door with her muzzle and helped herself to a great deal of grain becoming foundered. Her old age, the heaves, and now foundering; each condition pushed her closer to the edge. I treated her with several medications and injections, special padded shoes, and every witch-doctor remedy I had heard of, but her time was over. Her ribs had become pronounced and her movement all but non-existent while the pain she was enduring even on "bute" could be easily observed. Each of her hoofs eventually began to separate from the coronet band and the inevitable had to be dealt with; and now.

The vet. came to our farm. My wife and I gave Shadow many treats, which we knew she enjoyed, as we took a lock of her mane to keep in a scrap book. Then it was time. We put her filly in a stall and led her slowly out of the barn. We stayed with her, scratching her neck and giving her more horse treats. I kissed her nose. The vet. compassionately asked if we were ready to which we responded, "Yes, go ahead." Tears ran down my wife's face and a large lump swelled in my throat as the vet. injected the first syringe making Shadow lean back and wobble trying to keep her balance. Her eyes fell into line with my own and an expression became evident on her face and in her eyes. The second syringe was empty now and we helped her to the ground as gently as possible. My wife's tears flowed steadily and my heart dropped to the earth along with Shadow's exhausted body. I really wanted to cry but for some reason I just couldn't. I would come to miss her even more than I thought at the time, for there was no greeting the next morning as I began to feed. The last expression I saw in Shadow's eyes was a peaceful display. She now was free from all the pain and suffering she had endured daily. Drawing on that final expression of peace and replaying it in my mind's eye comforts me often.

A friend's child asked, "Where did Shadow go?". I told the child exactly what I believe in my heart. If heaven is everything that will make us truly happy then there will be near the pearly gates in a never ending lush green pasture a charcoal black mare. She will gallop endlessly, only stopping to graze without care on the terrific bounty of tasty green grasses. Her breath will flow inwards and out again, effortlessly quenching her body's thirst for the purest of air. The shine from her black coat will rival that of a glistening reflection of the golden sun coming off of a calm still pond. Running briskly through the pasture will be a brook, offering an abundance of cool clear water from which she may drink Her long silky mane will be waving in the wind while her hoofs strike the ground gracefully in a running-walk the like of which has never before been equaled in any show-ring. Held high in the air, her tail will attest to her pride and her love of life. A scent will fill the air which can only be described as an early spring morning in Kentucky. Her ears will point sharply upwards to heaven sky when she hears me getting near.

As I walk up the pathway of gold, before the gates of heaven this sight I will see and an ever so familiar nicker will call to my ears: greeting me once more.

In Jesus name I pray- Amen.

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