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The horse whisperer / De paardenfluisteraar door Nicholas Evans

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Title

The Horse Whisperer

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Summary:

The book consists of 36 chapters, divided in five parts.

Part 1: chapters 1 to 5

Part 2: chapters 6 to 13

Part 3: chapters 14 to 27

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Part 4: chapters 28 to 35

Part 5: chapter 36 (epilogue)

Part one

The main characters, the family Maclean are introduced and also the people in their entourage. Grace loves horse riding. She and her friend Judith had had an accident. They run into a truck with their horses. Judith and Gulliver, her horse got killed. Grace had lost her leg and Pilgrim, her horse was physically and mentally in a bad shape. The horse has been kept alive although some people think he's better off dead. Also the period of rehabilitation of Grace is described.

Part two

Annie is searching for someone who can help Pilgrim. In the library she reads about horse whisperers, those are people who heal horses physically and mentally. In this part a horse whisperer called Tom Booker is introduced. We read something about his past and what he does nowadays. He lives in Montana on the ranch that belonged to his parents. He lives there with his brother and his family. Annie wants him to take a look at Pilgrim. When he's in the neighbourhood he stops by but when he sees in what bad shape the horse is in and how the sons of Mrs. Dyer treat the horses, he goes away angry. Then Annie got the feeling that the only way for her daughter and the whole family to heal is that Pilgrim must get better. So she's travelling with Grace and Pilgrim across two states to go to Montana and see Tom Booker.

Part three

Annie and Grace stayed in a village near the range of the family Booker. Tom Booker finally agreed to help Pilgrim. But because he's in the worst shape a horse could be, Tom can't guarantee that he could heal him. Pilgrim has been moved to the range and Tom is working with him to teach him to be a horse again, because he's afraid of everything. Grace has to be present with all these sessions. So she has to be driven to the range all day, because this is not convenient they move to a little cottage on the countryside. In all that time on the range something happens between Tom and Annie. Diana the wife of Tom's brother has noticed that something's going on between Tom and Annie. Grace has been riding again on one of the horses of Tom since the accident. Also the relationship between Annie and Grace is getting better than. So everyone is making progress. Robert, Grace's father has left behind because he has to work. Now he's coming over for a weekend.

Part four

Robert is visiting the range and Tom and Annie are trying to act normal. But they both know they have feelings for each other. Even Robert noticed that something has changed, but he thinks it has got to do with Pilgrim and Grace. Tom and Grace have a surprise for Robert. Grace is going to try to ride Pilgrim. So far Pilgrim only let Tom ride him. But her prosthesis is broken and something goes wrong. She falls off Pilgrim. Afterwards the Maclean family decides that Grace goes back to New York with Robert for a new prosthesis. At the same time the Booker family (except for Tom) has planned a trip to Disney Land and Tom has to go to see another horse. So Annie is alone the whole week because she has to work. Tom was on his way to see the other horse but the only thing he could think of was Annie. So he turned around and got back to the range. During that week they had an affair. When everyone got back they gave a party. At that party Grace found out that there was more between Tom and her mother than just friendship. The morning after that Grace was so angry that she took out Pilgrim and went for a ride with him. When Annie woke up and didn't see Grace she got worried. At the range they found out that Pilgrim was missing. Tom and Frank, his brother saddled their horses and went after her. Finally they found her surrounded by wild horses. The leader of the wild horses wanted to fight Pilgrim. Tom walked towards them and got Pilgrim and Grace away from the horse. But instead of leaving Tom stands still. Then he moved towards the stallion and the stallion staggered and the hooves of the animal landed on the head of Tom. He was dead. To Grace it seemed like he wanted to die.

Part five

The Maclean family moved from the big city to Chatham a little village on the country-side after Tom died. Annie got pregnant although the doctors had said that she could never have children. She got a son but he looks nothing like Grace or Robert. Through this child Annie could heal. They are really a family again.

Perspective

There is an omniscient person. We know the thoughts of all the main characters.

Characters

Main characters:

Grace Maclean: After the accident she's secluding herself from the rest of the world. She hasn't processed the accident and the death of her best friend yet. She would like to but she's afraid that she will be hurt again. She's not understood by her the people in her entourage. But how could they understand, nobody has ever been in such a situation. Because of Tom the relationship between her and her mother has improved. They start talking again.

Annie Maclean: Grace's mother. Even before the accident she already carried a feeling of guilt, because after Grace she couldn't have children any more. She got four miscarriages and she blamed herself for this. After the accident she blames herself for what has happened to Grace. This comes between her and Grace and their relationship is far from good. She feels attracted to Tom, but she doesn't feel guilty about it. I think that's because she puts everything aside for Grace to heal, but she has her needs too. And because Tom is the one who helped her with a lot of things, she feels close to him.

Tom Booker: He's a silent man and doesn't say much. I think that sometimes the horses are his best friends. He knows everything about them and he uses that knowledge to heal Pilgrim. He thinks of other people first, but when he meets Annie he feels something he hasn't felt before. But at first he doesn't give in because she married. At the end of the book they both decide to think of themselves first and then the others.

Other characters:

Robert Maclean: Grace's father

Judith: Grace's friend

Gulliver: Judith's horse

Mrs. Dyer: owner of the stables where the horses stood

The Booker family:

Frank: father

Diana: mother

Joe: eldest son

Scott and Craig: twin brothers

Don Farlow: Annie's boss

Wayne Tanner: person who was driving the truck that hit the girls with their horses

Time

There's about two years between the accident and when they have moved to Chatham.

Place

New York: where the Maclean lived and where the accident happened

Montana: where the range of the Bookers is.

Chatham: a village where the Macleans moved.

Suspense during the story

It begins with the accident: will everyone be all right. The trip to Montana: how will Tom react. The tension between Annie and Tom: will somebody find out about them. Will Pilgrim be healed: this is during the whole story.

Symbolism

The process of healing Pilgrim stands for the healing of the family Maclean. The loop of cord from Tom that he always carried with him to show tricks with it. This stands for the intimacy between Tom and Annie. The stallion at the end stands for Tom's death. The baby Annie gets stands for the last piece of healing for Annie.

Theme and motives

Theme: A story about a girl and her horse after they had an accident and got hurt.

Motives:

* Healing

* Not being understood: Grace is not understood by the people in the environment and Pilgrim is not understood by everybody except for Tom.

Pain

Explanation of the title

A horse whisperer is a man who heals horses and understands them. Just like Tom Booker, he's the one who heals Pilgrim.

Genre

It's a drama story, a novel.

My opinion of the story

It's one of the most beautiful books I've read. It's not just another love story. There are a lot more facts that makes the story more interesting. Like Pilgrim, will he get better. I only think it would be better if we knew more about the characters. I mean for instance Grace, we hardly know what she thinks. And I think it would be funny if we saw certain scenes from his point of view. I think the construction of the novel was very clear. They didn't introduce all the characters in the first two chapters. I sometimes get confused in a book because there are too many people introduced in the beginning of the book and I don't know then who's who. But in this novel they did it step by step. The language was not too difficult, but that's because it's an American book. I find English books more difficult than American books. That's because English is more formal and static sometimes. The places where the story took place were described very clearly. I could imagine those places in my mind. I think this could have happened for real but not that often. And it could only have happened in America, because here in Holland you can't get a couple of months free of work so easily. And you have to be wealthy to do these kinds of things.

My expectations

I heard from everyone that the film was great and the also the book. And I think they were right, it is a great story. Very touching. This book fulfilled my expectations. I can recommend it to everyone.