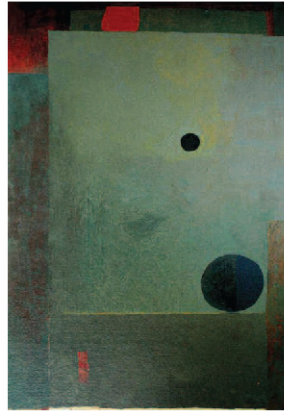


The following story is from the book

The Central Figures
The Báb
Volume Two



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The Wild Stallion

*Written by Irene Taafaki
Illustrated by Carla Trimble*

The flashing eyes of a dark stallion blazed. He began to speak, and the stable became silent as the other horses listened to his clear voice.

“I will tell you the story of the greatest man who ever mounted my saddle! This happened in my youthful years, but I can recall the time as if it were only yesterday.

“From as early as I can remember, I belonged to the stable of Prince Malik Qásim in Urúmíyyih. What a fine young stallion I was! My coat was dark and glossy, my mane fine and well brushed, and my tail plaited with ribbon. How I enjoyed walking in the Prince’s royal processions! Then I would toss my head high in the air, swing my tail proudly, and trot along in time to the clash of cymbal and roll of drums. I was a very proud young horse, and I made a promise to myself that only a

truly great man would ever ride me! So I became very dangerous to all riders as I searched for a real master. They called me a difficult horse, but I didn't think I was: it was only that I didn't want just anyone to ride me!

“Prince Malik Qásim sent an invitation to the most skillful and clever horsemen. He challenged them to try to break me in, yet none of them were good enough for me!

“What fun I had with them! Let me tell you what I did. First I stood quietly and watched their faces as they came towards me. I could easily tell who was afraid: I could see by their faces and trembling hands. Some men were bolder. They would glare as if to dare me to disobey them. After I had had a good look into their faces, I allowed the saddle to be put on my back. Then my fun began! As soon as they placed a foot in my stirrup, I reared up onto my hind legs, tossed my head and, with a shrill whinny, galloped off. I pranced and turned until the poor horseman could hold on no longer and fell to the ground!

“After some time no one had the courage even to try to mount me. Every challenge to ride me was refused, and I was left alone to do as I pleased.

“I spent my days running wild and free over the Prince's lands. If it was hot, I rested in the green shade of a cool glade by the stream that trickled across my meadow.





“The days passed, each one the same. Then everything changed one warm morning. Shortly after the golden sun had risen that day, my groom came out to the meadow and called to me. As I came close, he threw a halter over my head. Before long I was being led into town and through its narrow winding streets to the public square.

“I was surprised. Quite a crowd had gathered. All were talking and shouting with great excitement. It was not long before I guessed what was going to happen. Prince Malik Qásim had challenged someone to ride me! The people of the town were arguing as to who would be successful. Amidst the din I could hear them well:

“‘This horse will never be ridden!’

“‘Let us see what the Siyyid can do!’

“‘How can such a man tame a wild horse?’

“My friends, I can tell you that I was annoyed. I didn’t want another contest. I didn’t like this mob of people. I didn’t like to be ridden at all! Snorting angrily, I shied and tried to gallop off, but my groom knew me well and held my halter with a firm grip. There was no escape.

“‘Who on earth has Prince Malik Qásim invited to ride me this time?’ I thought crossly. ‘Maybe a general? Another

prince? Could it be the king himself?' I stamped my impatient hooves on the dusty road. 'Let the contest be over; then I can run free again in my meadow.'

"Well now! Imagine my astonishment when instead of a great prince or a mighty general, a very different type of person walked quietly towards me. He was a Man who was neither tall nor short. He wore a simple cloak and the green turban of a siyyid which told me He was descended from the Holy Family of the Prophet Muḥammad.

"The Man looked into my face with deep, loving eyes. No one had looked at me quite like that before, not even Prince Malik Qásim who cared about me greatly. Then I felt Him stroke my head with kind and gentle hands. At His touch, all thought of hurting anyone went right out of my mind. I stopped stamping my impatient hooves and became quiet.

"I'll take this Man anywhere He wishes,' I thought. 'I have found my real Master at last!'

"Meanwhile my groom was rushing towards the Siyyid, begging Him not to try to ride me. 'He has already thrown the bravest and most skillful of horsemen. Please refuse this invitation!'

"To this the Siyyid replied, 'Fear not. Commit us to the care of the Almighty.'





“I stood motionless. He placed His foot in my stirrup and mounted my back. Then at the command of His clear, gentle voice, I moved forward. I held my head high. To carry this Man was a greater honor than being part of Prince Malik Qásim’s processions.

“The huge crowd in the town square gasped and became silent. They were astonished to see me so calm and obedient. Then one man exclaimed, ‘This is truly marvelous! How could this wild horse be so quiet?’

“Another asked in an excited voice, ‘Do we see a miracle?’

“After this many of the crowd ran forward and tried to kiss my stirrups. There would have been quite a crush if my groom and some other of Prince Malik Qásim’s attendants hadn’t been there to make the way clear. Despite all the commotion, I continued to make my way through the crowd. All the noise in the world couldn’t have disturbed me. I was too busy—carefully carrying my precious Passenger!

“He directed me along the narrow streets of the town to the public bath. Once there He dismounted and went inside while I waited patiently at the entrance. After He had bathed, He mounted me again, and I returned through the streets to the public square. There was a lot of scuffling behind me, and I

learned later that many of the crowd who had followed us had rushed into the bath to carry away some of the drops of the water in which He had bathed. They said that only a person with special powers could have ridden me. They believed that this water must be precious!

“Arriving back at the public square, I saw that Prince Malik Qásim himself had come to greet us. I could see by his face that he was as surprised to see me being ridden as everyone else. The Prince greeted my Siyyid warmly and then took Him away from me to his own palace.

“As for me? I was led away by my groom. Back I went to my big, empty meadow. Once again my time was my own and I was free to gallop wherever I wished.

“I never saw my special Rider again, but I often heard His name. Anytime I was taken through the narrow streets of Urúmíyyih, the townsfolk would point and cry, ‘There’s the wild horse that was tamed by the Siyyid they called the Báb!’ The Báb—yes! That was how I came to know His name. Through all my long life I never forgot it. Nor could I forget His gentle Person and the ride we had together that beautiful warm morning.” ★

