

The Sentient Horse

By Missy Wryn



Do you court your horse before riding? Do you wait for your horse's permission before mounting? I was all set to go for a trail ride early Saturday morning as I bounded out to the barn to get my faithful Paco booted and tacked up to go.

I had gathered all the necessary equipment, boots and saddle having them neatly ready to begin the preparation. I retrieved Paco from his paddock, led him to the tie ring and immediately bent down with hoof pick in hand and boot next to his foot.

I asked him to pick up his foot in my usual way by gently squeezing his fetlock area, but he wouldn't budge. While bent over I told him "I'll brush you after I get your boots on so let me pick up your foot" but he still didn't budge. I leaned into him as I continued to squeeze his fetlock, even bumped him with my elbow to get his attention, but he was not picking up that foot.

I stopped asking as it dawned on me, I hadn't even taken the time to say hello, I didn't even acknowledge him and in my haste I was treating him like a piece of exercise equipment that I could turn on and off.

I put my tools down and threw my arms around his neck apologizing for being such a brute. I stroked his neck as I told him how much I loved him and he hugged me back by pressing me

deeper into his chest with his chin. He nuzzled me with his lips as I moved around him rubbing and scratching expressing my adoration. Once we had connected in mutual affection I bent down once again to ask for his foot but it was already raised in offering to me.

Paco rubbed my back with his lips as I cleaned his hooves and donned each boot. We had a spectacular enchanted ride in the forest as I stretched out my hands to the trees while my dear friend Paco carried me on his back with the reins lying upon his withers. I acknowledge Paco and all horses as sentient beings who

thrive when acknowledged, not so different from human beings.

Internationally recognized Gentle Horse Trainer and member of the Association of Professional Humane Educators, Missy Wryn provides comprehensive horse training, horse management, and effective communication workshops, clinics, and presentations across the globe and at her Zen Barn in Estacada, Oregon.

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