

Another big fat tear falls on her face and bounces and rolls off. I am almost done with the last row of interior stitches. My butt is getting sore sitting on the pavement, but I dare not twitch a muscle. I can't allow her to get upset again. It's getting easier to stitch through the tears. I am concentrating a little better. The veterinarian is using a yard stick to point at where the next row of stitch should go. Fanny snorts and whickers a little. She hates the vet. Even his voice sets her off.

How can I get the stitches done if she struggles again? She's had enough sedative to knock out an elephant and still she will not tolerate him. I wish my dad would quit pacing, he's making me nervous. I know he is Not OK with all this, but what choice do we have right now? I have to finish this.

I bet I can get this finished with about 30 more stitches or so. I am onto the exterior ones now. I had to switch from dissolvable to something a little more like 10# test line. I stop for a moment and pet my horse's face. I love her so much it hurt, right now. I need to calm myself and get this finished. I am still shaking with fear and stress and upset. She can feel that. I need to be able to reassure her.

An hour or two ago, we were at a gymkhana. Our saddle club has one every month. Poles and barrels, keyhole and rescue race – it was all so fun. My sisters and I loved these Sundays. When I wasn't riding, I was in the booth announcing and trying to increase the level of fun. Picking on people, cracking jokes.

Fanny was known to be one of the fastest horses in the club, but the least predictable. She had had a rough go of it down in Texas. She was at a working ranch there and some cowboy came home some Saturday night all pissy drunk and took a 2 X 4 to her face. 180 stitches the first time. She has hated men ever since.

She is ok with my dad, he feeds her and he is gentle with horses. I love her fiercely. Mostly because I never know what's going on with her. We are both damaged good, kindred wild souls. I fairly worship her. My grandmother is sure I am going to get killed on her someday. She has begged my grandfather to sell the horse many times. She remains. I think my grandpa loves her wildness too. And she's a looker.

Super red sorrel with a tiny star. Sixteen hands of tall and lanky. And ultra nervous and unpredictable. That would be a thousand pounds of "you never know what she is going to do". Not for the faint of heart. A loca for a loca.

What landed us in the driveway of the vet with her head in my lap an upholstery needle in my hand giving her another 100+ stitches, was a pole bending race. Fanny is not so great at pole bending, she is too tall and fast. A little mustang

or a morgan would be better for this race. But I entered anyway. I pretty much enter all the races.

We rounded the last pole to head back through the pattern and she cracked her eye brow on the top of the pole. Split everything the cowboy cracked open before, open again. I fell more than jumped off her and immediately started crying. What a mess.

Friends and fellow club members ran to the arena to help in any way they could. I heard so many opinions in such a short time. I sent someone to call my dad and have him call the vet and meet me there. I told my sister to get her horse in the trailer. She refused.

I calmed Fanny down the best I could. Someone unsaddled her and started throwing gear into to back of the truck. Thank heaven the trailer was still hitched. I don't think I could have concentrated enough to handle that.

We put a sack over her face and loaded her into the trailer blind. She was calmer that way. I had to pick up her feet when she got to the trailer and show her how to get them up. She did great with her back feet.

For being such a generally freaky horse, she was trusting me completely. By the time we were loaded and I was sitting behind the wheel, I was exhausted and panicked and shaking. Lots of people volunteered to go with me, but I really had to be alone. We weren't out of the woods yet. I was a basket case. I prayed every minute of the white knuckled drive, every corner so slow and gentle. I heard her scramble only once and only a little. She still had the bag over her face.

My dad was waiting in the driveway at the vet's.

"What happened now?"

"Oh, just a little accident with a pole."

I could tell he was pretty upset. It was difficult getting Fanny out of the trailer. But as soon as we took the bag off her face for the vet to look at her she reared and took off. She reacted so fast I lost the lead rope and she was gone. I took off after her. Dear lord this was not going well.

She finally let me get her lead. But she refused to come back to the driveway at the vet's. The vet gave my dad a syringe and he came over to where we were down the road a bit. He gave her the first sedative. She reacted to the needle but I was hanging on tight this time. The vet was now apprised of her aversion to men. We waited for the sedative to do its work.

I saw her eyelids start to droop a little. I started walking her back toward the trailer, talking to her and petting her and being so encouraging. Her head lowered as she relaxed and the sedative kicked in. The vet said one word and she started bolting and rearing again. She was not going to allow him anywhere near her. She was fighting and scrambling with her hooves sliding on the pavement.

The panic and fear I felt was paralyzing. I was so scared for her. There was blood everywhere. I was covered in it. There were trails of it. My dad was covered in it. She was getting weaker. We gave her another sedative.

It seemed to have no effect whatsoever. As soon as the vet was within 10 feet of her, she would freak. She panicked and fought and was injuring herself further. We had to get some stitches into her eyebrow and face. We gave her another dose of sedative. She fought just as hard. Even though in-between bouts of fighting, her eyelids would droop to almost closing.

Finally, she just laid down on the driveway. The vet had the needle strung and alcohol wipes and such handy on a tray. I sat down on the driveway and put her head in my lap. Dad handed me each thing, while the vet whispered instructions. I thought I had cried all my tears out, but they wouldn't stop.

Things are still life and death at 16. I loved Fanny more than anything in the world. I didn't want her to be broken. I didn't want her to fight. I didn't want to be the one giving her stitches. It was so hard. Completely emotionally draining. I was forcing myself to focus on each stitch. Through the tears.

What seemed like eons later, I was done. I was covering the wound with salve and anti-fly stuff. As I started to get up, so did she. She knew it was time to go home. She was so easy to get back into the trailer. The vet said she would be basically blind in that eye for weeks perhaps months. He said to move carefully around her and use your voice to always let her know where you are. He gave instructions for changing the dressing and daily care. He also gave us the name of a female vet, should she need further care. That vet was over a hundred miles away. I kinda decided I should consider being a vet when I grow up.

Our relationship and level of trust grew significantly during her recovery. She healed fast and I spent hours just hanging out with her in the pasture. I would lay in the grass and she would eat around my body. I would pretend to be sleeping and she would nudge me hard, till I got up. Sometimes I would get on her bareback and just lay on her while she was grazing.

When the stitches were ready to come out, grandpa held her head and I sat on the gate and took each one out with a little embroidery scissors. I was so

scared. Nightmarish visions of putting the stitches in would not go away. She seemed to know what was going on and she was cooperating.

Her sight came back fully in about 2 and a half months. All during the 'moon' blindness, she behaved quite well. We had reached a new level of trust and comfort with each other.

Fanny and I had many more adventures and ran lots more races until grandpa sold her when I went to college. One Sunday at my last gymkhana before leaving for the dorms, a stranger came over and said, "I'll take her from here."

I looked at my grandpa but I had no words. Tears again, streaming hot down my face.

"What are you going to do with a horse when you are at college? Who's going to ride her?"

If it had been a woman, I might not have been so concerned. I thought my whole world was shattering apart from the middle out. This wasn't happening. Was it? My kindred spirit, my wild girl.

"Your grandma and I want you to concentrate on school and not come home every weekend to see that horse. Your dad agrees."

Like that made me feel better. It was a whole conspiracy.

We say goodbye to so many pets and friends during a life. They all leave their mark. Lessons learned, relationships, adventures. All those stories written in our hearts making us rich. All those days of laying in the grass, soaking up the sunshine, chomping noises and flies buzzing in the background. Who would trade a minute of that?

The gentleman that bought my girl did so to make her a pampered pet to his grandchildren. She had a gentle life. She was 22 years old at that time and lived several more years getting fat and eating apples in a nice pasture. I know for a fact she loved to run. But at 22, I think some nice shade and the handfed apples may have been sweeter than a trophy or a ribbon.

