MY FRIEND FLICKA

by .. MARY O'HARA

CHAPTER I: Ten-year-old Ken McLaughlin wants a colt of his own. But his father, a veteran of the World War, and a hard-headed Scot, refuses to give him one until Ken's school grades are better and until he learns to handle the other horses on their Wyoming ranch. Ken's mother tries to protect him from the anger of his father and the youthful bullying of his older brother, Howard. Ken manages somehow to do things right. And Howard's constant "running over Ken's failures, she sends him up stairs to study.

CHAPTER II: But Ken can't concentrate on arithmetic when his father and Howard are out rounding up the mares and colts. He dashes off to a favorite spot from which to watch the roundup. As the horses come up he accidentally stampedes them.

CHAPTER III: Meanwhile Nell, Ken's mother, has persuaded Captain McLaughlin that he is defeating his purpose by refusing to let Ken have a colt. So when Ken comes down to breakfast the day after he has stampeded the horses he is surprised to hear, not a scolding, but the news that he is to have his colt.

CHAPTER IV: Ken wants a horse colt until he sees the lovely young mare being groomed.

CHAPTER V: Driving to town with his father, Ken tells him that he has decided to take a fly.

CHAPTER VI: And then Ken tells his fly by accident. Riding along over the range, Howard and Ken come upon a mare and a beautiful scored filly. Howard is outcast of the ranch, because she is the daughter of a stallion called the Alkali. The Alkies is "lone," the horse breeds for's name for a wild, independent horse. But Ken knows when he sees her that Rocket's little scored colt is his.

CHAPTER VII: Ken's solemn announcement that he chooses Rocket's scored filly is a regular bombshell, touching off his father's latest angry outburst. Captain McLaughlin doesn't mind, nearly tells Ken that he will have to take the consequences of an unwise choice. They bring in the yearlings, but Flicka escapes.

CHAPTER VIII: Rocket has been sold, and now the problem is to capture her and get her into the truck. They finally manage it, but not before Mackenzie's foot is badly cut. With Rocket in the truck McLaughlin and Gus, the foreman, drive off. As they leave the ranch Rocket's mother, the Alkali, and her colt and stolen an overhanging tree.

CHAPTER IX: Flicka is caught again.

CHAPTER X: But their troubles are not over. Flicka tries to escape again. This time she tries to jump over a wire fence and is badly injured when she becomes tangled in the wire.

CHAPTER XI: When he sees Ken's determination to save Flicka he offers a olive in his attitude toward the boy. But he doesn't know that what interests Ken most is the thought that Flicka may be the mare intended for him by "fate" before she discovered.

CHAPTER XII: Slowly Ken visited Flicka with Flicka. Ken seems to be getting better, and her wounds seem to be healed a little. While he is out in his pasture with her he hears sounds of pain and gain coming from a neighboring pasture. He finds that Howard has broken his leg. Ken goes to town to see Howard with hopefully for Gus to let him go to a trip to town.

CHAPTER XIII: Ken's father is in prison of the way he refuses to ride Flicka that he puts with Ken. He finally gives in, with unusual speed. But Nell isn't a quick to see that Ken is inserted in a school. Finds happiness.

CHAPTER XIV: At last the moment comes for the colt's release to the range. Ken is not sufficient to see Flicka go, but of course it is no surprise to Ken to discover that she is decidedly out of Captain McLaughlin spends his days in preparation for Ken's return. Ken is off-set, but relieved when his father tells him that he had been in school for the last year and Ken three hundred dollars.

CHAPTER XV: Nell and Captain McLaughlin exerted over a trivial matter, and Nell goes to town to a movie and not telling Ken she has seen a wildcat near the ranch.

CHAPTER XVI: Nell tells Captain McLaughlin that she has seen a wildcat, but tells her to say his eats mostly in the corral. Ken writes a composition and sends it to his mother in the hope that he will be passed, because he has not forgotten that it will rest his father that a hunting dollars if he isn't.

CHAPTER XVII: Flicka gives a most exciting worm. Ken doesn't hear his father tell Gus to shoot Flicka, but he knows what is going to happen when he sees that the gun is missing. He runs to the corral and Gus to wait until the next morning and Gus arrives. After the others are in bed Ken runs out of the house. He finds Flicka caught in the stream, sliding closer and closer to her doom. Ken pulls her head out of the water, but the rest of her body is under the ice. So he does such work that he can, and sets there, Flicka's head in his lap.

CHAPTER XVIII

Gus stood up, slowly, the gun in his hand, and stood there, hesitating. He had received his orders. He was to shoot Flicka some time soon, when Ken was not around. There would never be a better moment.

A minute or so passed, while the Swede stood looking down at the filly and pondering the situation. Then, straightening up, he put the Winchester in the crook of his left arm, raised his eyes to scan the sky and read the weather signs, and his hands automatically fumbled in his clothing for his pipe, tobacco, and matches. A few puffs of his pipe would help him to think this out. That the filly might actually recover was hardly likely. He wondered how long Ken had been holding her —there was no telling—they were all familiar with Ken's habits—he might have been there since dawn.

He found that his mind had made itself up while he stood there smoking. He would not shoot Flicka just yet. Perhaps, by the time Ken had had his breakfast and got warmed up, he might have something to say that would change his father's mind.

The man walked back up the little path, and on to his wheels.

On this day, which happened to be a Saturday, Rich drove the Studebaker in to Cheyenne, picked up the doctor's trail, and hunted him for many hours and many miles. He found him, at last, at three o'clock in the afternoon.

It was two hours later when the doctor, Dr. Scott by name, and Rob in the other, roared up the hill behind the ranch house.

Ken's condition had been growing steadily worse. In spite of the hot mustard baths, chills shook him every few minutes until his teeth chattered. His temperature was 103 when Nell put him to bed. By noon it was 104. Much of the time he slept, or, at least, thought Nell as she sat beside the bed, holding one of his thin, helpless-feeling hands in both of hers, he was in some sort of unconsciousness.

She had discovered that his pajamas had never been slept in last night—never unfolded. He had gone to his room at the usual time but apparently had not undressed. She figured out what had happened. If it was Flicka's last night on earth—Ken had gone down to her when the house was quiet. He had, doubtless, spent the night just as Gus had expected, holding Flicka in the water.

She wondered if the filly was alive or dead. And then came a deeper wonder, as to the lives of the two, boy and filly, seemed interwoven.

When Ken roused from his sleep or coma, sometimes he looked at her as if he knew her, sometimes stared at her unknowing. Sometimes it seemed to be listening, turned his head and eyes toward the window, and lay motionless.

"Listening for her—" thought Nell, "it's hear her nicker. Or—listening for a shot."

The day grew darker and more gloomy. Once, then, it was a sudden sound like the soft rolling of a series of drumrolls, and then a long drive off. As they leave the ranch Rocket's mother, the Alkali, and her colt and stolen an overhanging spot.

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would not be back till long after dark. He did not know just what to do.

After Tim and Gus had their supper in the bunk house, they walked down to the creek. Tim did not speak as they approached the filly, lying stretched out flat on the grassy bank, just as Gus had left her; but their eyes were straining at her to see if she was dead or alive.

She raised her head as they reached her.

"By the Powers!" exclaimed Tim. "There she is!"

She dropped her head, raised it again, and moved her legs and became sure of it struggling to rise. The men cheered her on. She rolled over on her belly, reached out her forefeet and scrambled halfway up.

"Yer what!" said Gus. "She got plenty urrent yet."

"Hi!" cheered Tim. "She's up!"

But Flicka swayed, sank down again and lay flat. This time she gave notice that she would not rise again by heaving a deep rush and closing her eyes.

Gus took his pipe out of his mouth, and then laid it down on the ground. In order, he would try to save the filly. Ken had gone too far to let him down.

"Ay'm goin to fix a blanket sling for her, Tim, and ye'll get her on her feet and keep her up. If she's got a chance, that'll help. If she ain't it'll do harm anyway."

While they were getting the tackle, the post-hole digger and shovel, crowbar, ropes, and blanket, the downpour of rain came again. This time it was persistent. The two men went to the bunk house, put on their oilskins, and brought a couple of lanterns with them when they carried the stuff down to the creek.

Flicka was just as they had left her.

"She's sure goin to get another drenching," said Tim.

"Won't hurt her," said the Swede. "She be in the understorms since the kin born."

It took them an hour to rig the sling. They struck rocks in their digging which had to be prized out. Flicka was lying on a piece of level sward, only a little higher than the level of the creek. To the far side, the ground rose sharply behind her, in a steep hill which, on part of its surface, was a sheer slide of rock—a wonder of the glacial period which were characteristic of the terrain of the ranch.

The men set two tall and sturdy aspen poles deep into the ground on each side of the filly, then rolled her onto the folded blanket. The ends of the blanket were passed and the rope tied on to them in a knot which, the more weight was on it, the tighter it was drawn. The ends of the blanket were passed over a crowbar laid across them. The end of each rope was passed through a hole bored through the post a few inches below the notch; and when everything was ready, Gus said, "Altogether, now!" They each pulled on their rope, and the blanket and filly rose off the earth together. When she had reached a height where her feet just lightly touched the earth, they let be, and fastened the ends of the ropes to the crowbar.

So she hung—not in the least discomforted, and when Tim brought her a bucket of water, put her nose in it and drank.

While the two men were carrying the tools back to the tool house, the heavens let loose.

"We're in for it now," said Tim. "I didn't think it could last much longer."

"I'm glad ve got de tarps stretched over dem stacks," said Gus. "De hay's not packed hard."

When they reached the ranch house, he handed Tim the tools he was carrying. "I'm gonna stop here, Tim, and see if de Missus need anything—fix' out how do little feller is."

Tim went on without him, and Gus went into the kitchen, where the oil lamp was hung on the wall beside the stove, and removed his slicker.

Nell heard him stamping about and hurried downstairs.

"Is that you, Gus?"

"Yes, Missus—how is de little boy?"

"Oh Gus, we don't know yet—he seems pretty sick." Nell's face was grave and anxious. Standing there belted in her narrow gray flannel wrapper, she looked slim and childish. Her hair was loose on her shoulders, and she put a hand back of her head to push it back into nature. "Gus—is Flicka dead?"

"No'm. Tim and I, we just gotta fixin her up in a blanket sling and she can't stand alone, but she's life in her, and she reached for de bucket of water and drank it down like a good one."

Nell's eyes sank to the floor, and she stood a moment in thought lapping her foot. "You didn't shoot her," she said at last, thinking aloud. "Gus, did he—did Captain McLaughlin say you didn't have to shoot her?"

"No'm, he told me last night to find a time when Ken were kept in bed and shoot her. But ven I found 'em like dat ven mornin'—I—I—well—"

"I know," said Nell quickly, "I would have done the same thing. It's Ken. Maybe it'll help him—it'll make him so happy that she's still alive. Gus, you've got to promise you to set up a cot for me in Ken's room, if he should take a turn—take care of him. It's down in the cellar you're taking it up."

"I'll do it, ma'm," said Gus solemnly. "I—I—you go up to de little boy, and I'll bring de cot up and set it up for you."

Nell ran upstairs, and found Ken's eyes wide open. He moved every few seconds, turned from one side to the other. His breath was shallow and fast. She sat down and took care of their child's wrist. By this she knew that Ken's pulse, which is far more important.

Above all we must teach them by precept and example to love God supremely, and to walk after His commandments. What is the use if you then you done your duty? Are your children walking in truth?

II. Be on Guard Against False Teachers (II John 5-11).

We are not to accept false teachings even by entertaining such "teachers" in our homes. We have with us. They are the invention of Satan. We are told that they are "not of God," and that we are to take care of their souls as well. This is a problem in the Church today.

Such teachers may easily be recognized. They do not abide in the doctrine by Dr. Douglass. In all ages the Church has been plagued by those who want to substitute something for the Gospel. Paul warned the Galatians with bright ideas of their own concerning the Gospel. Jesus warned against the false religion of the scribes and Pharisees and refused to have it mixed with His teaching. Peter warned against those who would bring in damnable heresies. Jude urged us to earnestly contend for the faith once delivered to the saints. John says that false teachers are deceivers when measured by the standard of God's Word. We must not be deceived by them, but must minimize the boldness of the evil workers. Watch against them, and watch against the deceivers, and watch against false teachers.

III. Be Diligent in Putting Forward True Teachers (II John 5-8).

The true teacher which should be set against false teachers should be viewed with love for God and love for souls. We are told to "love one another." This love is primarily in the hope of the salvation of the lost, and reminds us of a grace which has been all but lost in the Church today—that of brotherly love. Christians should be one another. Humility is to behave to being a servant to all men