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Waiting for Stormy

An excerpt from *Stormy, Misty's Foal*

by Marguerite Henry

In Stormy, Misty's Foal, Paul and Maureen Beebe live with their grandparents on the island of Chincoteague. In this scene from Chapter 2 of the book, Paul and Maureen are thinking about Misty, their prized horse, who is about to give birth to her foal. Chincoteague and Assateague are islands off Virginia and Maryland. They are known for their wild horses.

1 The day at school seemed never-ending. Maureen answered questions like a robot. She heard her own voice say, "Christopher Columbus was one of the first men who believed the world was round. So he went east by sailing west."

2 "Very good, Maureen. You may sit down."

3 But Maureen remained standing, staring fixedly at the map over the blackboard. Her mind suddenly went racing across the world, and backward in time, to a tall-masted ship. Not the one that Columbus sailed, but the one that brought the ponies to Assateague. And she saw a great wind come up, and she watched it slap the ship onto a reef and crack it open like the shell of an egg, and she saw the ponies spewed in the sea, and she heard them thrashing and screaming in all the wreckage, and one looked just like Misty.

4 "I said," the teacher's voice cut through the dream, "you may sit down, Maureen."

5 The class tittered as Maureen quickly plopped into her seat.

6 In Paul's room, an oral examination was about to take place. "We'll begin alphabetically," Miss Ogle announced. "Question number one," she said in her crisp voice. "With all books closed, explain to the class which is older, the earth or the sea, and where the first forms of life appeared. We'll begin with Teddy Appleyard."

7 Teddy stood up, pointing to a blood-splotted handkerchief he held to his nose. He was promptly excused.

8 "Now then, Paul Beebe, you are next."

9 Dead silence.

10 "We'll begin," the teacher raised her voice, "with Paul Be-ee-b-e-e-e," and she stretched his name out like a rubber band. But even then it didn't reach him.

Maureen, anxious about Misty, daydreams in class about ponies drowning in a shipwreck, much to the annoyance of her teacher.



Notes



Notes

Paul is also distracted about Misty being back home and ready to give birth. He doesn't answer the teachers question, but instead his daydreaming about Misty being sucked down into a swamp.

11 He was not there in the little white schoolhouse at all. In his mind he was back at Pony Ranch, and Misty had broken out of her stall and gone tearing down the marsh. And in his fantasy he saw the colt being born; and while it was all wet and new, it was sucked slowly, slowly down into the miry bog. There was no sound, no whimper at all. Just the wind squeaking through the grasses.

12 Tap! Tap! Miss Ogle rapped her pencil sharply on the desk. "Boys and girls," she said, "you have all heard of people suffering from nightmares. But I declare, Paul Beebe is having a daymare."

13 The class burst into noisy laughter, and only then did the mad dream break apart.

14 Back home in Misty's shed, all was warm contentment. There was plenty of hay in the manger, good hay with here and there some sweet bush clover, and a block of salt hollowed out from many lickings so that her tongue just fitted. She worked at it now in slow delight, her tongue strokes stopping occasionally as she turned to watch a little brown hen rounding out a nest in a corner of the stall. Fearlessly, the hen let Misty walk around her, as if she liked company, and every now and again she made soft clucking sounds.

15 Out on the marsh Billy Blaze and Watch Eyes, pretending to be stallions, fought and neighed over the little band of mares. Misty looked out at them for a long time, then went to her manger and slowly began munching her hay. The hen, now satisfied with her nest, fluffed out her feathers and settled herself to lay one tiny brown egg.

16 Contentment closed them in like a soft cocoon.



Misty is back in her shed resting and eating hey Ann licking salt. She stares at the other horses before continuing to eat hey.