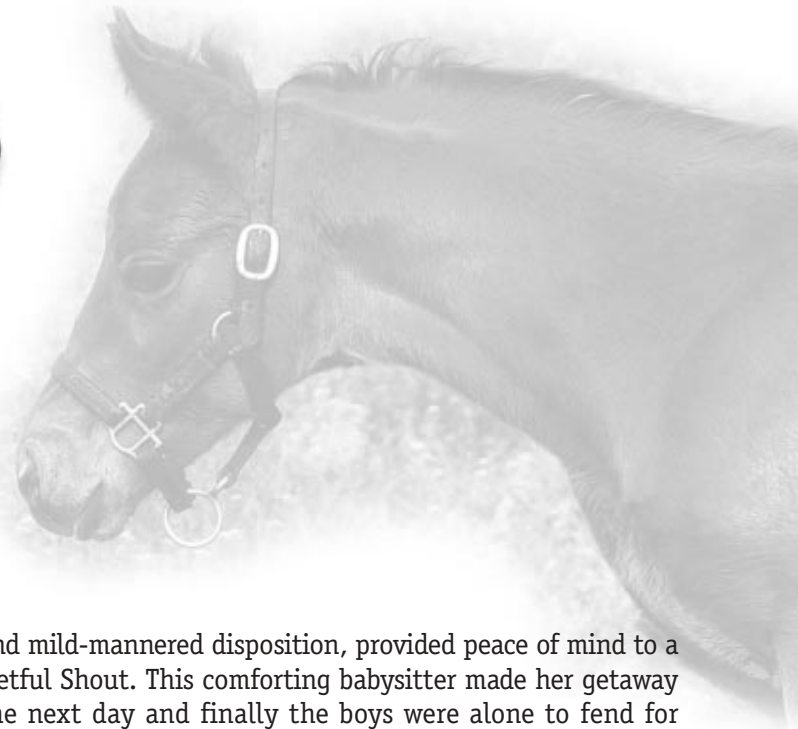




The Last SHOUT



On August 26, 2003 the Quarter Horse colt known as Shout celebrated five months of life. In recent weeks he had completely shed the fuzzy winterlike coat that all foals have and now has a sleek, rich chestnut coat that is marred only by the occasional black streak, compliments of a freshly painted fence. So life as Shout knew it was progressing simply and wonderfully. Despite monthly encounters, he'd even developed an amicable, though not loving, relationship with the farrier.

Only a few days following this birthday of sorts, Shout experienced his first step to independence—weaning. To say Shout greeted this day of reckoning with his usual flair for the dramatic would be a colossal understatement. But did he handle this separation as well as many other anxious, fear-stricken youngsters? Absolutely.

Shout and his playmate Higgins were weaned gradually from their dams. Shout's mother was the first to disappear, leaving Higgins and his dam to comfort Shout. As expected, the first wave of apprehension was the most intense, with a cacophony of whinnying and pounding hooves. When the realization hit that his dam was nowhere to be found, Shout became uneasy and lapped the field at a full-tilt gallop. Higgins did little to ease Shout's anxiety, merely watching the seemingly half-crazed Shout careen around the field. Skean seemed less fazed by the separation; she may have even been relieved to bid farewell to her youngster.

Once the initial frenzy waned, Shout gradually became accustomed to his parentless state and resumed his usual activities, which included dodging playful nips and kicks from Higgins, eating ferociously, and dozing contentedly in the autumn sun. It was not as though Shout and Higgins were completely abandoned, though. Higgins' dam, a commanding though calming force with her towering presence

and mild-mannered disposition, provided peace of mind to a fretful Shout. This comforting babysitter made her getaway the next day and finally the boys were alone to fend for themselves. So far they've done just fine.

By the beginning of September, Shout weighed in at 607 pounds, having gained 50 pounds during his fifth month of life. The colt registers slightly above the average for Kentucky colts born in March. Over the past month, he gained approximately two pounds per day, which is just less than the three pounds a day he was gaining in July. Higgins, though significantly taller, still lagged behind Shout by a few pounds, but his daily gain was nearly two and one-half pounds.

What does the future hold for Shout and Higgins? Shout was bred to be a show-ring hunter, so he will enjoy the luxury of unlimited grazing and casual handling for a couple of years before he's placed in training. If all goes as planned, Shout may be seen at a show near you! Higgins, on the other hand, was bred for the racetrack. Because he is structurally correct, has outstanding bloodlines, and is early-maturing, he is headed for the sales ring in late fall. Though the colts are taking different paths now, their lives may soon intersect again. After all, stranger things have happened. ☺