

Guinness is an amazing horse.

I came to own Guinness from an ad placed on one of those horse ads web sites.

I went to check him out, and should have been warned when he was immediately high headed and snorting, nervous just to be led out of the paddock he shared with two other horses.

The owner said oh, he is a bit buddy sour.

I longed him, not very well, as he kept stopping, but enough to see he had a beautiful trot and to ascertain that he was not unsound.

Again, I should have paid heed when the owner said that she would not ride him, nor allow me to ride him, as she "didn't know what he might do."

She told me that she thought he came from the Amish, and that she had had him trained for 30 days, dressage. I asked if he bucked and she said no, well, a little crow hop when he was being ridden and the rider patted him near his tail.

He was not very expensive, so I figured well, he needs finishing, but I can work with that, and being gorgeous with the most expressive gentle eye, I bought him.

We trailered him to the barn where I board my horse and unloaded him. Again, he was high headed and nervous, snorting and blowing. But I attributed that to it being a new place to him.

The next day I went to the barn and after leading him out of his paddock was going to have him see the rest of the place, such as the outdoor arena. My husband began to lead him and at one point I noticed something on his coat on his shoulder and went to brush it off. He exploded and just like that had bolted and bucked out, kicking me full in the chest. I sustained a cracked rib from that encounter. Still, I chalked it up to being nervous in a new place.

Over the next weeks and months he grew a bit more relaxed, but was never far from being totally anxious, and seemed to be expecting something bad to happen. He was afraid. Unexpected touches, sounds, anything could put him into a full out panic. And a panicking 1500 pound animal is not something easy to work with and very safe to be around. I began to be nervous around him and that did not help matters, as he would feel my anxiety and reflect it. Still, I worked with him, trying to do what I knew to do, but I work full time and mostly I have some short evenings and the weekends to work and play with my horses. I was able to ride him, somewhat, at a walk and a couple brief stretches of trot.

One day we decided to try him in the outdoor arena, rather than the indoor, and so I took my mare and my husband had Guinness. My husband asked Guinness to trot, which he did, but then abruptly stopped which threw my husband forward in the saddle. Guinness then sort of lurched diagonally and my husband began to fall, and doing so, put out his arm. It shattered and he underwent 5 hours of trauma surgery the next morning. The barn owner had done training and so she said she would help me train him. But she did not work with him regularly either, and he got more and more anxious when she would try to get him to longe (he seemed to have a direct fear and dislike of being longed) and he sometimes would escape when being bridled. This happened on one day, and she caught him after some yelling and brought him into the arena. He reared at once point, and I thought, oh, he should not be ridden today. Still, she got on him. As she turned him away from the mounting block his heel rapped it, and it set him off, he leaped forward, bucking, leaping forward, bucking, leaping forward. My trainer came off and ended up with many bruises and some torn muscles and a broken wrist. I knew then that I could not keep this horse. I loved him, but I could not find a way to work with him. My experience was not that great, and I did not have the time to consistently work with him and work him through whatever it was that caused him to be so afraid.

This horse was not mean. Not at all. He was a huge teddy bear. But he was most of the time afraid, so afraid that he would forget any training and trust and panic, needing to escape, and when not allowed escape, fight. My heart sank. The trainer said to sell him. I was too afraid of him to even get him from the paddock and groom him some days. I wanted to reach him, to get to the amazing horse I sensed he was, but did not know how and did not have the time available that I knew he needed to get there.

So I put an ad out to sell him, giving the story of him, that he bucked, was possibly once abused, had great fear, and so needed someone willing and able to give him time and work with him. And or, have him as a pasture only companion horse. I knew I could not let him just go, though, I had to be sure he would find a good home. I was afraid that he would go and someone would not understand or be like me, not know or have the time to work with him, and he would be sold again, maybe at auction, maybe to a kill buyer. I could not let that happen. So I was honest in the ad.

That ad caught Shawn's eye. She came and saw him, we talked about him for a good hour, maybe longer. And she took him home. I cried. But I knew, could feel that he would be ok. I can't believe how right that was. Under Shawn and Molly's care, Guinness truly is the teddy bear I saw in him. He is now a horse that they ride and use ponying the horses in training. He stand for the farrier and vet, with no problems. When I had him, he was fretful and dancing in the cross ties, unable to stand still for long as he became too nervous and needed to see and be able to flee if need be.

Shawn has sent me reports on how he has been doing. And I have seen the photos on the web site of him. It seemed unbelievable that this was the same horse. I was so happy for him, that finally he could just be a horse, and not fear anything and everything.

This year, I saw him at the state fair, in a stall, with his head out, being petted by children and adults and thrilling them. When I had him, this would be unthinkable, he would have broken out of that stall and thundered away, trying to flee his fear. He would be rearing, possibly, scared out of any remembrance of training and trust, kicking out and trying to protect himself from the fear.

I get teary eyed, thinking of him there, calm, happy. I cannot thank Shawn and Molly enough for giving Guinness the chance he needed to be the horse he has always meant to be. They worked with him to bring out the horse that I could see in his eyes, but could not reach myself due to inexperience and lack of time. In a sense, they rescued him, and gave him a new life. A life that is not full of fear.

To me, you are a blessing, and I am thankful because you helped him. That matters. More than anything, to me. I almost had thought to have him put down, not because he was dangerous, but because I almost felt that that might be better than maybe ending up at auction and a kill buyer because of someone not understanding him. Or someone abusing him or beating him because they didn't understand or know how to work with him. And I was afraid someone might get hurt, too. I was SO afraid of that. But I couldn't do that to him. So I decided I would hold out and find him the right person who could try to understand him and give him the time and patience he needed.

And that person was so very much obviously you (and Molly, too.)

And I can fully understand not wanting a horse's bad rep in a sense, to follow him or her - to color someone's trust in him or her.

Horses, like people, can change, can learn to trust and bond. We should give them that chance, when possible and not hold their past against them. Esp since his past was something done to him. He was never ever mean. He was terrified. I knew that, always, I knew that it was fear, not mean. So yeah. He deserved better. And look at what a wonderful horse he is now!