

**Julia Ecklar****"THE HORSE-TAMER'S DAUGHTER"**

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My father was a horsetamer on the edge of Halley  
Plain.  
His work was good and his horses fine, but he got little  
gain,  
For few folk come out of Halley Town; the trade is gone  
away,  
And the distant glower  
Of the ruined tower  
Makes few folk care to stay.  
So poor we were, but free we were, as the wild herds  
on the plain,  
And I was a child  
As free and wild  
As the wind in my tangled mane.

My grandam told me cradle tales of the great days  
long ago  
when the wizards ruled, and the land was taxed, and  
the Lords would come and  
go.  
But the land was torn by war, she said, the tower was  
broken down,  
And the Lords appear  
No longer here  
To rule over Halley Town.  
And neither do the wizards come, take our children,  
one in ten.  
So grateful be  
That we're poor but free,  
And you are not living then.

My father had no sons at all, nor could he pay the fee  
Of hiring men to help his work, so he turned to mother  
and me.  
We helped him run the wild ones down, to catch and  
tame and train,  
And we lived thus free  
And merrily  
On the edge of Halley Plain.  
So well I loved the whispering grass and the children of  
the land

But in time I learned,  
As the seasons turned,  
To call them into my hand.

As I rode out on Halley Plain, I would set my mind to fly,  
'Till I felt the grass below my feet and the birds high in  
the sky.  
I'd feel the wild ones running, and I'd bid them turn  
again,  
And a few I'd see  
Would come to me,  
About every one in ten.  
I never called them to the rope, for the trust I'd not  
betray,  
And willingly  
They would carry me  
On the plains to run and play.

There is a lake beyond the town; the tower stands on its  
shore,  
Close by, the holy castle looms, where none may pass  
the door.  
But I always chose that ruined tower as my favorite  
place to play,  
And I daydreamed long  
Of my grandam's songs  
And the tales of the ancient days.  
The stones breathed wonderous tales to me of the  
powers within the ground,  
'Till within the stones  
Of the tower's bones  
A magic mirror I found.

The mirror in its iron frame was bland as the winter sky.  
Never a sight did it show to me 'till I set my mind to fly.  
Aye, then it showed me wonderous things; a window on  
the world,  
The plains, the town,  
The land around,  
For as far as the oceans curled.  
I wore it tied about my neck, so to keep it always near.  
Besides the land  
And my wild horse band,  
'Twas the treasure I held most dear.

But, I'll never wear red robes, I'll never wear a blue  
stone.  
The ruined tower stands abandoned and alone.  
But when the moons are high and the wind is roaring  
free,  
When I send my silent call, wild horses come to me.

As we rode down to Halley town one summer market  
day,  
I saw the folk in turmoil run, and I heard an old man  
say,  
"Go back, go back, you horsetamer, the wizards come  
again.  
They come, I fear,  
For the children here;  
They're taking one in ten.  
Go back, go back, you horsetamer, and your daughter  
hide away.  
Go conceal your child  
Where the land is wild  
'Till the wizards have gone away."

Back I rode to Halley Plain, as fast as a horse could run,  
And I hid myself in the ruined tower, away from wind  
and sun.  
I gazed into the mirror's depths to see what might  
befall,  
And close at hand  
Saw the wizards' band  
So fierce and fair and tall.  
Then one of them raised up his eyes, and he said,  
"Who can this be?"  
And he turned his head  
With its hair so red,  
And he looked straight away at me!

"What is this power that I feel," said he, "so clear and  
raw and strong?  
Ride up, ride up, my sisters, all, my god, we've been  
searching wrong!  
More power's here than we thought to find, the gods so  
jest with men.  
It may be still  
That within our will,  
That tower will awake again.  
'Twas an ill-trained keeper's mind I met, but I've rarely  
felt such power.  
We dare not wait  
Lest we come too late;  
Make haste for the Halley Tower."

As soon as I thus heard their plan, I turned my mind  
away,  
And I sent it flying o'er the plain. To the wild ones I did  
say,  
"Oh, come to me, my free friends, all, oh, come to my  
right hand,

We must prevent  
These Lords' intent  
Of the claiming of our land.  
For if they should rule the land once more, we shall all  
be servant men,  
And you, my dears,  
Will be captives here  
And will never run free again."

I bound my mind to the wild ones' minds, and I called  
as I never did call,  
'Till seven mares and a stallion bold came into the  
ancient hall.  
Just seven mares, a stallion bold, a magic mirror, and  
me  
To stay the hand  
Of the Lords' command  
And keep the plainsfolk free.  
So I bound my soul to the wild ones' souls as I'd never  
done before,  
And we raised our might  
In a ring of light  
To fight in a wizards' war.

For I'll never wear red robes, I'll never wear a blue  
stone.  
The ruined tower stands abandoned and alone.  
But when the moons are high and the wind is roaring  
free,  
When I send my silent call, wild horses come to me.

We raised a shield about the tower, all made of wind  
and thought.  
With hooves of might through the mirror's sight, we  
battered, thrust, and  
fought.  
The wizards flinched, the wizards fell, and they cried  
up from the ground,  
"Have done, have done,  
Ye nine and one,  
And tell us what we've found.  
How did your starstone hold intact when it should have  
burned away?  
What kind of men  
Can stand up again  
Through the fires that we threw today?"

"I have no stone at all," said I, "just a mirror like the  
sea,  
And you fought with never a man this day, just eight  
wild horses and me.

I am the horsetamer's daughter, the defender of the  
land,  
And I know my kind  
Never were inclined  
To live at a Lord's command.  
So it is my wish ye shall go away and shall leave us as  
we've been.  
Leave us free  
As we choose to be.  
We will never be ruled again."

Up then spoke a wizard Lord, "It shall be as you have  
said,  
Better to make us an eighth domain than to duel 'till we  
all are dead.  
With a symbol made of wild beasts and a plain-purse-  
level screen,  
You've all the power  
Of any good tower,  
Much more than many I've seen.  
You are the living matrix, then, that's all that you can  
be.  
It's clear your breed  
Is of wizards' seed.  
Oh, child, keep away from me!"

So, Halley Tower is tenanted now. Fresh straw lies on  
the floor.  
Tall wild horses come and go, free through the open  
door.  
The Halley folk bring corn and cloth and wood for the  
winter chill.  
The tales they tell  
Are spreading well,  
And I fear they always will.  
I'm just the horestamer's daughter, but they love me  
for my power;  
They've made of me  
What I fear to be  
The keeper of Halley Tower.

But I'll never wear red robes, I'll never wear a blue  
stone.  
The ancient tower stands no longer quite alone.  
But when the moons are high and the wind is roaring  
free,  
When I send my silent call, wild horses come to me.

