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The Clever Fire Horses

Mary Graham Bonner

The old barn on the edge of town had been abandoned for years. Nobody minded when it caught fire — it was no use to anyone, and the fire crew were more concerned about the houses nearby.

But the fire horses wouldn't settle.

The moment the engines pulled up, the horses began to kick and fuss. They pulled hard against their harnesses, tossed their heads, struck their hooves against the cobblestones. The firemen couldn't understand it — these were experienced horses, steady in any blaze.

"Something's wrong," said one of the older firemen, watching them. "I've never seen these horses make a fuss for no reason. I'm going in."

He climbed through a broken window at the back of the barn, where the smoke was thinner. And there, in a far corner, stood a horse — an old road horse, trembling from head to hoof, his eyes white with panic.

The fireman unbolted the back doors and led him out into the night air.

The moment the horse appeared, the fire horses changed completely. They stepped high and pressed against each other in obvious delight, as if to say: he's safe, he made it out.

A moment later, an old man came running from the inn across the road, crying out. He had left his horse in the barn for the night — the innkeeper had said it was perfectly safe — and now—

Then he saw his horse standing whole and unharmed in the firelight.

He walked to the animal and pressed his forehead gently to the horse's mane. The horse gave a soft, low neigh.

"I don't know how to thank you," the old man said, his voice rough.

"Don't thank us," said the fireman, nodding toward the fire horses, who stood



watching calmly now that their job was done. "They're the ones who knew."

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