

Yo Yo and The Great Flood

written and illustrated by

Claudia Coleman

Claudia Coleman - Publisher

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The characters and events in this book are fictitious. Any similarity to real persons, living or dead, is coincidental and not intended by the author.

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Yo Yo was a real horse whom I rode and loved for 24 years. He lived to the ripe old age of 27 and never lost his sense of humor even as old age limited his activities and health. Everyone knew him, everyone laughed with him, and everyone applauded me for staying on when he bucked. His inspiration fathered this story and will continue to influence many for years to come. I cannot thank him enough. The following card was left at his gravesite in the forest.

Dear Claudia,
We only just heard about
Yoyo from Ricky Williams. I was
so shocked + saddened -
He had so many good stories
& adventures!
You were so lucky to have
had a horse such as he - and Yoyo
was so lucky to have a friend
such as you! Our thoughts are
with you.

About the Author

Claudia Coleman

A native of Southern Pines, North Carolina, Claudia Coleman grew up in a family of artists, musicians and statesmen. She showed passion for horses and dogs at an early age, and wise family members let her start riding at age 6. Horses and dogs have been a part of her life ever since.

As a professional fine artist for over 40 years in the field of equine portraiture, she has painted more horses and dogs than she can remember. Her work hangs around the world in private and corporate collections. She is also in demand as a book illustrator in the equine field.



photo courtesy of Blake Photo

An education which included a year in Europe at The American School in Switzerland combined emphasis on biology and art. That melding of both is apparent in her attention to detail and her gift for capturing a likeness.

She resides in Southern Pines with her horses and Australian Terriers.

visit her web site to learn more of her work and life

<http://www.am-portfolio.com>





The early September day was warm and humid. Yo Yo spent his time savoring the last summer grasses before fall frosts put the pasture to rest for the winter. It was a serene and peaceful time of the year for him. Summer was leaving, the days were getting shorter, and he looked forward to cool nights. The energy it gave him made him want to romp and play.

Yo Yo had lived most of his long life in the same place -- this place he called home. It was blessed with green rolling pastures and sweet smelling pine forests. He loved to be ridden on the miles of wooded trails, with soft sand under his feet. He had made many friends over the years and done many wonderful things with his owner, Cindy Clay. He was really quite famous among horses for his many achievements, and he took pride in that. His snowy white coat and long shimmering tail were known far and wide. There was no greater feeling for him than to have someone learn of his reputation and come to visit. He would swell with pride and prance around his pasture, tail high and nostrils flared, to the glee of everyone watching. Although he was getting older, he still loved to show off once in a while. Afterwards, he would tell his friends in the neighboring pastures about his exploits, and they always loved to listen.

Today a soft, freshening breeze blew from the east with smells not common where he lived. He had smelled them before and felt the soft breezes before. It made him a little uneasy. You see, this was the time of the big storms that came from the ocean and he remembered one very scary night of wind and rain and smells like these. Still, the sun was out, the grass good, and he sighed with contentment. Soon he and his friend, Joe, would be in the barn for the night, safe from any danger.

Joe was a little red horse who had been with him now for about two years. Yo Yo was very fond of him. Even though there were horses in other pastures nearby, it was much better having a buddy in his own pasture. Sometimes he would get cross with Joe and nip him on his rump. Then they would play for hours, scratching each other on the neck with their teeth -- a favorite pastime. For a long time Yo Yo had lived by himself, but he was never happier than when he had a true friend who lived in his barn. He and Joe were true friends.

Late in the day Cindy, "the boss" as he called her, came to the pasture where he and his friend Joe were still grazing. She whistled for them to come in, and lifting their heads with cheeks full of grass, they slowly walked toward the gate. She had owned YoYo since he was

three years old, and together they had more fun than he imagined anyone could. They really could talk to each other, and he loved that. He was always happy to go to her because she would prepare him a tasty meal of oats, corn, rice, molasses, and chopped carrots. Sometimes, she would even throw in a pear. Pears were his very favorite fruit in the world. Whenever he ate them he would roll his eyes back and sigh. They were so good. In fact, he often said he would be happy to eat them all day long.

The walk to the barn wound down a narrow path through the woods, and both horses liked the daily routine. Yo Yo liked to tease everyone and pretend to spook, and he often made Cindy laugh. He wondered who was leading whom. When they reached the barn, it was already cleaned and tidy for the night, with hay in their mangers and water buckets full. Yo Yo knew Cindy always took care to do things right, and both animals loved her for that. Tucked in his stall, Yo Yo finished his meal and pushed through his hay, eating the best morsels first. Then he sighed and settled in for a quiet, peaceful evening.

Yo Yo turned on his computer, located over his feed tub, and looked to find the weather forecasts. Although it was a peaceful, warm evening, those smells were still there on the breeze and that worried him. His computer was very special, made just for him. It was custom designed because keyboards and computer mice are not made for horses, and how could he possibly press those little buttons? So he had a tiny microphone and a special joy stick that he could move all over the screen, shaped like a carrot -- it was even orange!

The computer also had sound, so he and Joe could listen to music or books or whatever they liked.

But tonight there was news. A huge storm was gaining strength over the ocean and headed their way. Cindy had been busy all day doing unusual things like putting away his favorite toys and buckets. She was hiding all kinds of things that usually were just left lying around. He could tell she was worried about something, so he figured he would just play it cool and



stay on the Internet.

The pictures on the screen of this storm were the biggest he had ever seen, and he could read that everyone was in a fuss over it. During the last storm, he did not have his computer and it was really scary not knowing what to expect. He couldn't quite understand why the storm appeared in all different colors on the computer when clouds are gray and white, but sometimes trying to understand things on the computer was almost impossible. After all, it was made by people, not horses.

The news showed that they would be near the path of this huge storm, and that they might get lots and lots of rain and very big winds. He did not like the winds. Rain he could handle, but the wind was the scariest, with big branches and trees falling all around. He shuddered at the thought of going through another big storm. Finally it was just too nerve-racking to watch any more and he turned it off, resigning himself to quiet munching and he hoped, sleep.

That night the storm came in waves. The rain started slowly, then a little wind pushed more rain in, and then it stopped. Soon another wave of rain and wind would whoosh in, and so it was all night. A big roar of wind sent an enormous limb slamming onto the roof of his barn, and he jumped right up out of bed. The wind brought more eerie smells from faraway lands. Sleep was nearly impossible, so he just stood in the corner of his stall next to Joe for company.

After finally dozing in the early morning hours, he awoke to see that the wind and rain had stopped. Maybe the storm had passed. He quickly searched the computer for the latest news, and was thrilled to see that the storm had, indeed, passed them by. "Hooray, hooray," he thought, "the sun will be out soon." Even Joe was excited that the sun would be out, and the grass would be very tasty after a refreshing rain. As Yo Yo read the news he learned the storm had missed him, but not others.

He saw pictures of water everywhere; 15 inches, 20 inches -- he could not imagine what it must be like. People had been moved into big barns because their houses were underwater. He couldn't see any grass anywhere. The news maps showed that all the land east of him was underwater! He had learned to read maps many years ago because horses must never forget where they have been. They memorize maps just in case, and never get lost. What he saw looked terrible -- all brown, trees floating by, and roads with gaping holes. He had never liked big holes after he fell into one when he was young and had to have help to get out. He shuddered. What



he was seeing on the screen was terrifying.

Soon Cindy came to take them out to their pasture, and he was relieved not to have to watch any more about the storm. She seemed very happy that the farm had been spared any damage, but he wondered if she had even seen all those pictures. He would have to take this up with his neighbor and long time friend,

Tracker.

Tracker lived on the neighboring farm. He was an old Bywater foxhound who had been a legend in his youth for his wonderful tracking nose and big booming voice. His long ears flew out backwards when he ran on a smell, and he could run fast. The farmer who owned him loved to go out in the evening with friends, and listen to Tracker and their hounds hollering about every smell they found. Yo Yo could never see the need to holler all the time about smells, even though he could holler about food. That was something worth yelling for. He and Tracker often chatted at the fence about matters of state, who was getting a new doghouse, or who had been to the vet. They talked for hours sometimes, usually about the good old days.

So he wandered over to the fence and whinnied for Tracker to come and chat. Tracker crawled out of his doghouse, gave a mighty stretch and a yawn, and trotted over to see his friend.

“Tracker, have you seen the news yet?”

“No, but I heard something on the radio about the storm, and folks being stranded out

of their doghouses.”

“Well, it is really bad down east. I’ve got some friends that I am worried about.”

“Come to think about it, I got a few relations down that way I ain’t seen in a spell.”

“Look, Tracker, we’ve got to find out what has happened to them, and you have to get the information we are going to need.”

“What information? What are we gonna need it for anyhow?”

“Don’t worry about that. You go down to the feed store and listen all day. Everyone there will know what is going on. Then come back here before I go in for the night, and tell me everything you hear.”

“I haven’t even had breakfast yet, Yo. Can’t I eat first?”

“No, you’ll live without a meal -- you’re getting fat anyway. Now go on. Hurry!”

Tracker trotted off down the road that led to the feed store to see what he could learn. He really didn’t understand why his old friend was so agitated. The storm had passed, the puddles would soon dry up, and everyone would return to normal. It was like that after every storm. But he often went on snooping trips for Yo Yo, and it was something to do that morning.

The feed store was easy for a dog to find, even for a blind dog, if he followed his nose. They had all kinds of scrumptious things to eat there -- horse feed, cattle feed, chicken feed, cat food, and of course, lots of dog food. He was really hungry now, and realized that his assignment could be a pretty good deal after all. In the past, he used to wander over once in a while, and the girls would give him some biscuits or kibble. Sometimes he even got a smoked bone to take home. His stomach was really growling with the thought of breakfast, and he trotted faster and faster to get there.

Tracker was surprised to see so many people at the feed store. He slipped through the door easily, but could hardly get the attention of anyone because everyone was talking about the storm. In desperation, he pushed behind the counter and nudged one of his favorite girls who worked there. It took three nudges to get her to notice him, but she smiled and rubbed his ears and got the message: a couple of biscuits! At last he could concentrate on listening. And listen he did. The more he heard, the more alarmed he became.

They were saying that not only had lots of people died, or gotten stranded and even lost,

but hundreds of animals had died, or were stranded. Hundreds! He could not believe it. A good hound and a good horse can swim so why didn't they? Well, the stories grew worse and worse the more he listened. The rivers had not yet reached their peak of flooding, and it was expected to be like this for at least two weeks! Rescuers found many animals, but they had no food for them. It was so sad. He felt sick. He had been so gripped by all the news, that he had forgotten to look at the time. It was nearly Yo Yo's feed time!



He shot out the door of the feed store, and ran through the woods and fields as fast as he could to get the news to Yo Yo. Barking the last few yards, he called for Yo Yo to come and listen to

his findings. Panting hard, he waited to tell Yo Yo what he had learned.

Yo Yo trotted up to the fence right away to hear his news.

“So Tracker, what did you find out?”

“Well, I did like you said and slipped into the feed store. You never saw such a crowd, all talking at once. There was a lot of excitement, and I had a hard time even scrounging a biscuit.”

“I sent you there to find out what was going on, not to beg for biscuits.”

“Well, I was hungry! Anyway, it’s worse than you said. There are dead horses, dead dogs, cows -- you name it, and many that are stranded with water rising all around them. Then, there are animals that are missing and no one knows where they could be. It’s a huge mess.”

“Okay Tracker, you did great. I have to go in now, but I’ll meet you here tomorrow first thing sharp and we’ll work on a plan. Maybe we can help.”

“Good, I can finally go home get a real meal!”

Joe followed Yo Yo into their barn for the night, hardly saying a word. Joe had seen Yo Yo like this before when something was on his mind, and had learned it was best to just tippy-toe around and not start any games. Games were such fun, but Yo Yo, being old and wise, had little tolerance for play when he had something on his mind.

As soon as he finished dinner, Yo Yo turned on his computer to see the latest reports and get his email. More pictures of water and victims; it was so grim. Then he could see from the maps and photos that the area affected was bigger than any pasture he had ever been in, almost inconceivable to him. So he opened his mail and found a long list of messages from friends all over the world! There was so much to read. With a sigh, he pulled the hay over under the screen so he could crunch and chat at the same time in his favorite leisurely fashion.

Everyone wanted to know what had happened here, what there. There were too many questions. But suddenly one message made his ears go straight up. It was from a friend in California who had heard that a feed store was launching a campaign to send hay, grain, and all kinds of animal food to the flooded areas. “That was really nice,” he thought, until he read further. The name of the store was the same as his store! He replied immediately to find out

where this store was; after all there were a lot of The Feed Stores in this world.

Pace, pace, pace. He couldn't stand it waiting for a reply. What was taking that mustang so long? He wanted an instant answer! Seconds seemed to last forever, and then the little window popped up on the screen -- a message!

His friend said the feed store was in Yo Yo's town, and that people from all over were donating money and items. "How wonderful," Yo Yo thought. "This could be just the opportunity we need." With the moon rising and crickets singing, he began working on a plan.



Rising early, Yo Yo was eager for the day to begin so he could get started on his plan. Snorting and shaking his head, he waited for Cindy to feed him and turn him out for the day. Yo Yo got up with the sun, of course, and he was really ready for breakfast when she finally strolled into the barn. “Why can’t she feed me on a regular schedule?” he thought. Bring the food promptly at 6:30 when it tastes best, not 7:30, or 8:00. It annoyed him not having things in perfect order. He blew his nose and licked his lips in anticipation. The first bite was the best, and he pushed as much grain in his mouth as he could until his cheeks puffed out. As soon as he finished eating, he and Joe would head out for the day. This morning he ate fast because he was eager to talk to Tracker.

Patience not being a virtue of his, today Yo Yo dug in his heels, and tore across the pasture as soon as he was turned loose, surprising Joe. He could hear Cindy laughing as she latched the gate behind them. Yo Yo made a beeline for Tracker’s side of the field, and hollered for him to come quickly. Tracker crawled out of his doghouse, gave a long stretch and a yawn, and jogged over to the fence. He was never one to move fast unless he was following some delicious smell; then he just went bonkers. Anyway, Yo Yo was very excited about what he had learned in his email, and proceeded to explain his plan to Tracker.

“Tracker, we have got to go down there and help some of those horses and dogs. My old friend Austin Jones moved there years ago and owned about 25 horses the last time I talked to him. Years ago here he took care of me when I was little, and I owe him one. So I have decided we are going to have to go there soon.”

“Are you sure you haven’t eaten some crazy weed again? We’re just taking off and going there? How on earth are we gonna do that? It would take us a week to get there and what would we eat along the way?”

“I found out over the Internet that our feed store is planning to send several big truck loads of hay and grain ...”

“And dog chow?” Tracker piped in.

“Is food all you think about? Geesh! Now listen. This is serious, and you’ve got to help. I want you to go back to the feed store and find out when they are going, and what kind of truck they are sending.”

“Whatchu think you’re gonna do, drive the truck? Ha, ha, ha!” Tracker laughed,

throwing his head up in the air.

“I’ll think of a way to get us there if you’ll get the info. Now scoot!”

“Okay, okay, I’m out of here.”

The day was beautiful, so Yo Yo really didn’t fret too much waiting for news from Tracker. The grass had popped up and was so succulent and tender from the warm rain that it tasted almost like spring. At least fine cuisine kept his mind off the task coming up for Tracker and him. He knew he was going to follow through with his plan, but how to sneak away and not leave Cindy and the whole place in a panic? That was a challenge. All would depend on timing -- when the truck would leave, and if they would be able to hide in it. He had ridden in many trucks, vans, and trailers in his life, but it is hard to hide a large white horse such as he. “Not to worry,” he thought. Something would come to him.

Around noon, Yo Yo heard a familiar bark from Tracker, and he trotted over to the fence to hear the latest information. Everything in his plan would depend on what his friend had overheard.

“So what’s going on down there now?”

“Well, I did like you said and went in for a biscuit again. Then I sat where I could hear the telephone and all the talk. It seems they are planning to send the first truck tomorrow morning at 9:00. They were telling all the customers that the truck was parked outside being packed for the trip, and people could donate halters, buckets or whatever to help. So I slipped out into the yard to check it out. It’s an enormous gooseneck horse trailer! We’s in luck, Yo; you’ll fit right in there!”

“Well that is real luck! I am familiar with that kind of trailer, but just how am I going to hide in there? I am not exactly small you know.”

“I got an idea. They are putting a lot of hay in there, and things are all sort of jumbled around right now. If you could sneak into the back stall when they ain’t looking, I can drag and stack some bales of hay in front of you, and if you keep your head down, they won’t see you. I can hide anywhere, so I’m not the problem. Hey, the worst that can happen is they find you and kick you off.”

“That’s a ridiculous plan,” scoffed Yo Yo. “They’ll find me for sure.”

“Look, it’s the only plan we got, and we’re gonna make it work. Just think positive. We’ll do it.”

“Alright, Tracker, I’ll meet you here at five o’clock tomorrow morning before the boss gets up, and we’ll see if we can pack the trailer for them -- ha ha! We’ve got our mission now! In the meantime, I’ll figure out how to deal with Cindy. Joe better not blab either, or I’ll keep him away from the water tank for the whole day and he hates that. He’s a nice guy, but sometimes he can be the biggest twit.”

“I better go eat big fixin’s this evening since you haven’t mentioned what we ‘re gonna eat while we are on this mission, as you call it. By the way, I always thought something was a mission if you couldn’t find it. Your plan isn’t a mission yet, is it?”

“No, Tracker, it’s not.” And Yo Yo threw his head up with laughter.

“See ya tomorrow!” Tracker shouted over his shoulder as he trotted home.

Yo Yo chuckled at his friend’s remark. Tracker always had something to say about everything. Keeping Cindy from going off the deep end when she found out he was gone was going to be a real task. Yo Yo had to think really hard of a way to enable himself and Tracker to get on that trailer and out of town without a posse after them. This time he couldn’t just talk to her and ask permission. If he left her an email telling where he had gone, she’d just come and fetch him. He didn’t like to lie to her, but maybe he could come up with just a little lie that would keep her quiet while he was away. Then a thought came to him. He would send Cindy a phony email from a friend of hers stating that she was picking him up early to go for a lesson, and that she would feed him. He often gave riding lessons to kids who were friends of Cindy’s, so this would be plausible. By the time she realized it was a smoke screen, they would be far away. That was it! So he turned on his computer, wrote his message, and sent it. Now there was no turning back, they were going.



After a restless night, Yo Yo awoke quickly to the tiniest rays of light glimmering on the horizon. He knew that the time to leave was near. The barn clock said it was 4:45, so he told Joe to keep his mouth shut or else. He reached over the door, wiggled the latch loose, and slipped out of his stall, hardly making a noise. Then he tiptoed across the barnyard and down the path towards Tracker's farm. The heavy morning air was rich, and he felt the energy it gave him. As soon as he was well away from the barn, he gave a little squeal and took off galloping through the woods. It was still quite dark, especially in the woods, but horses see very well in the dark, and he was sure glad he was blessed with excellent vision. He needed it now as he dodged trees and ducked hanging vines.

Nearing Tracker's farm, he slowed down and walked very softly. He was careful not to tread on the hard dirt road, where his hoof beats might alarm the other animals that lived nearby. Sneaking around the back of the house, he stopped about three strides from Tracker's doghouse, and whispered for him to come out.

"Tracker! I'm here. It's me. Come on, it's time. Let's go."

There was no answer so he whispered again a little louder.

"Come on, shake a leg. It's time for us to leave!"

Still, there was no answer. Yo Yo was afraid Tracker had forgotten. Maybe he had gone off after some smell in the woods, as he had been doing for several nights lately. His whole plan depended on his friend. Why didn't he come out of his doghouse?

Then from behind him, Tracker's familiar voice softly said, "Wuff." Yo Yo nearly leapt out of his skin.

"Oh! Tracker, darn you, you nearly scared me to death! My nerves are rattled as it is. You could have given me a heart attack. Whew, lets get going."

Yo Yo and Tracker trotted into the woods to a path that would take them to the feed store. Yo Yo knew every trail in the whole area from many years of living there, and this was the quickest, quietest way to get there. The sun was coming on up now, and he was worried about their being detected before they could stow away in the trailer. At last, they came to the back gate to the feed store parking lot. Tracker sniffed the air very hard, and Yo Yo listened, but as far as they could make out, the coast was clear. Fortunately, no one had bothered with this gate for years, so it was half open and hanging by only one hinge. He knew he could just



squeeze through. Yes! They were in!

“There it is; there’s the trailer,” Tracker said. “Come on, we’ll get you stuffed in there before anyone gets here. Then we’ll be a travelin’ pair from now on!”

Tracker went ahead into the trailer. He had to drag a couple of bales of hay out of the way so Yo Yo could walk up the ramp, and back into the last stall in the rear. Tracker was really very strong for an old hound, and he just put his teeth in the bailing twine and worked his way backwards -- a very efficient way to move hay around. “This is easy,” he thought. Now Yo Yo was in his place, and Tracker proceeded to barricade his friend behind a wall of hay. First, he laid a row of bales across the bottom. Then he and Yo Yo grabbed the others one by one, and lifted them up on each layer until there was only a foot of space left at the top. That left just enough room for Tracker to squeeze down into the stall with Yo Yo.

Now they waited. And waited. And waited.

“Gosh, I wonder what time it is now, Tracker. They said they were leaving at 9:00, right?”



“Yup, 9:00 sharp. That’s what they said.”

The waiting was tough. Time seemed to stand still, and even though Yo Yo had a window on the side he could peek out of, he couldn’t see or hear anything yet. Everything was so still. Then suddenly all kinds of clattering began. Cars driving in, people talking, big sliding doors opening. Instantly the place was all abuzz. Both of their hearts pounded from the excitement. If they could stay hidden, they had a chance of leaving.

It wasn’t long before men approached the trailer, and were talking about all the stuff they had to put in before the departure time. Bags of feed, more hay, all kinds of equipment; it all had to fit. Their plan was to carry as much as the trailer would hold, and that would be a

lot of goods.

“I don’t remember the hay being stacked already at the back of the trailer,” said one of the men.

Tracker gasped at the thought of discovery and covered his mouth with his paw.

“Maybe the boss did that before he left last night,” the other man said. “Who cares? That’s less for us to push around.”

“Yeah, you’re right about that; let’s get this job done. We have a stack of regular orders to do today, on top of this.”

The trailer shook every time they threw in a bale of hay or big bag of grain, but after about an hour, Yo Yo and Tracker heard the men say it was loaded and time to close the doors. Up went the ramp with a loud squeak, and then the top doors were shut with a bang, and that was it. The first leg of their adventure would soon begin!

The truck door slammed and then that magic sound -- the big diesel revving up: rattle, rattle, rattle. Yo Yo and Tracker could hardly contain themselves. What a beautiful sound. They were really going! For real!

The trailer gave a rough ride on the dirt road that left the feed store, and it was hard for Yo Yo to keep his feet under him. Every pothole really bounced him around, and once both front feet slipped, and he nearly lost his balance. Tracker had it made. He had stretched himself out on top of the hay where he could see out both sides of the trailer. Yo Yo could only see one side, so Tracker gave a running commentary of what he saw as they went along. Soon the ride was smoother, and Yo Yo could tell they were on the big highway now. The sound of the diesel told him they were cruising right along, and he could see the countryside passing by from his window.

“This is pretty cool,” Tracker said. “A horse and a hound on the loose, riding in style.”

They laughed at their success so far. Yo Yo also knew this was going to be the easiest traveling of the entire mission. Hard work lay ahead.