



JIM PAHZ

GOOD INTENTIONS

I first met Angelina in the beginning of her sophomore year. One day she just showed up at our door. She was a pleasant-looking individual, somewhat overweight, and appeared a little sad. I could sense she was nervous. She explained that she was a friend of a friend and mentioned some names I didn't recognize. "And," she said, hesitating, "well . . . I heard you had horses. I was wondering if you might let me come sometime and brush them. I'm not asking to ride the horses, I just want to groom them. I've had experience, I've been around horses all my life. I know this is an unusual request, and I apologize for making it. I have rehearsed this speech because I wanted to get it right. I practiced. I wasn't sure I could do this but I was told you and your wife were nice people and that you taught at the university. I hope you understand. I really like horses. I like being around them. They make me feel good."

I didn't know what to say. This girl was a stranger. There was something so pitiful about her that I was genuinely moved. I thought of my father and how he used to tell me to try and cultivate a *gracious spirit*. Those words were important to him. It was his version of the golden rule: treat others as you yourself would like to be treated.

I called Hannah into the room and introduced her to Angelina. I knew Hannah had a gracious spirit. Angelina stood with her head bent, eyes downcast, and repeated her request. Then Hannah reached for her hand and in a soft, motherly voice said to the young lady, "Sure you can. Come, Angelina, would you like to meet our horses?"

That was the beginning of a relationship that would last through Angelina's college career. At first we didn't pay much attention when she came and spent thirty or forty minutes in the barn. Then one day after Angelina had been coming for about five weeks we noticed her car had been parked outside the barn for a long time. "I better go check on her," I said, "and make