IN A DARK TIME IN AMERICAN HISTORY, TWO UNLIKELY HEROES BROUGHT HOPE TO MILLIONS

Seabiscuit

BY SPENCER KAYDEN

Seabiscuit with his famous rival War Admiral on his tail
**Scene 1**

*Saratoga, New York, August 1936*

N1: Racehorse owner Charles Howard and his trainer, Tom Smith, are looking at a horse named Seabiscuit.

Charles: He's got wobbly knees, and his ribs are sticking out.

Tom: Yup.

Charles: I hear he sleeps all the time.

Tom: Yup.

Charles: He’s lost almost every race this year.

Tom: Yup.

Charles: And you want me to buy this horse?

Tom: Yup.

N2: Charles stares hard at the horse.

Charles: I see something special in his eyes.

Tom: Buy that horse, Mr. Howard. He has real stuff in him.

**Scene 2**

*Detroit, Michigan, two weeks later*

N3: Two jockeys sit outside the gates of a racetrack.

Red: Man, I’m hungry.

George: Me too, but even if I had food, I couldn’t eat it.

Red: I know—the smaller the jockey, the faster the horse.

George: Still no job?

Red: Nope.

George: When was the last time you won a race?

Red: It’s been years. I’ve got nowhere to live. I’ve got 27 cents to my name. I’m at the end of my rope, George.

George (pointing at the track): Look, new horses are arriving. They’re going to need jockeys.

Red: This is my last chance.

N1: Red visits dozens of stables. Everyone turns him down.

N2: At the last stable, Red sees Tom wrangle a rowdy horse.

Red: You need a jockey for that wild fella?

Tom: Sure do, but no one can stay on him.

Red: What’s he called?

Tom: Seabiscuit. Better watch out, though. He took a bite out of the last jockey who came near him.

Stablehand: Mr. Howard wasted his money.
on that cranky little horse.

**Tom:** This here horse may be small, and he may be ornery, but we aim to make him a champion.

**Stablehand:**
Kinda hard if no one can ride him.

**N3:** Red holds out a sugar cube.

**Red:** Hello, 'Biscuit. My name’s John. But folks call me Red on account of my red hair.

**N1:** Seabiscuit takes the sugar cube and gently nuzzles Red’s shoulder.

**Tom (impressed):** Red, you’re hired.

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**Scene 3**

**A migrant-worker camp**

**Weedpatch, California. February 1937**

**N2:** A crowd of migrant families huddles around a rusted old truck. Pa hooks up a radio to the truck battery. The radio crackles to life.

**Pa:** Quiet down, folks! It’s time.

**A1:** Welcome to the Santa Anita Handicap, one of the country’s most important races! The top horse wins a hundred grand.

**Clarence:** $100,000! What a prize!

**A2:** We’ve got a new contender this year by the name of Seabiscuit.

**A1:** He’s a scrawny fellow. Doesn’t look like much of a horse.

**A2:** His jockey, Red Pollard, is nothing to brag about either. Showed up at the stables flat broke with a losing streak as long as my arm.

**Pa:** Sounds like one of us.

**A1:** Horses are at the gates, aaaand they’re off!

**A2:** It’s Seabiscuit out front, with Rosemont creeping up on the outside.

**N3:** The sound of hooves pounding the dirt thunders over the radio.

**A1:** Rosemont comes up on the rights Seabiscuit and Rosemont are neck and neck!

**A2:** They cross the wire together!

**Dot:** Who won?

**A1:** Ladies and gentlemen, it’s a photo finish—the judges have determined that the winner is . . . Rosemont. Rosemont for a hundred grand!

**N1:** The roar of the crowd drowns out the announcer.

**Dot:** Aw, I wanted Seabiscuit to win.

**Frankie:** Me too. Can you imagine being at one of those races?

**Pa:** We could never afford it.

**Frankie:** Yeah, but imagine.

**Pa:** It doesn’t do no good to dream.

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**Scene 4**

**Santa Anita Racetrack, later that day**

**Charles:** What happened out there, Red?

**Tom:** You knew Rosemont was right next to you. Why didn’t you push harder?

**Red:** I tried! We just got beat.

**Tom:** I know Seabiscuit has what it takes to be a champion. Do you?

**N2:** Tom sighs. He and Charles walk away.

**Red (to himself):** If anyone finds out my secret, they’ll never let me race again.

**N3:** George walks up.

**Red:** Georige, how do you do it? How do you keep your cool when the pressure is on?

**George:** When I’m out there, it’s just me and the horse, in our rhythm, together.
Everything else fades away.
Red: I’m one loss shy of being homeless again.
George: Just believe that anything is possible. Someone’s got to win, so why not you?

**Scene 5**

**Another migrant-worker camp, two years later**

N1: Pa is getting dressed before sunrise.
Pa: My only pair of pants is ripped again.
N2: Dot threads a needle and starts stitching.
Frankie: Seabiscuit is racing today, Pa. We’ll listen on the radio and tell you all about it.
Pa: That horse sure has turned into a celebrity.
Frankie: I hear there are more newspaper articles about Seabiscuit these days than about President Roosevelt.
N3: Dot holds up the pants, satisfied.

Dot: Nobody can beat the 'Biscuit.
Frankie: Yeah, not even War Admiral, the horse everyone said was unbeatable.
Clarence (walking in): Hey, the truck’s leaving.
Those potatoes won’t pick themselves.
N1: Pa sighs heavily.
Pa (quietly): Clarence, it’s not that I mind working hard, but breaking my back 16 hours a day for hardly any pay was not the life I was planning on.
Clarence: You had a plan?
Pa: We came to California after my wife died. This was supposed to be the land of plenty.
Clarence: Yeah, plenty of people with no homes, no food, and no money.
Pa: I wanted better for my kids.
Clarence: Frankie is 13 now. He could come work in the fields with us—
Pa: No. Those kids have been through enough.

**Scene 6**

**Later that day**

N2: Frankie, Dot, and a crowd of others gather around the radio.
A1: It’s a grand day at the races. More crowded than usual ‘cause Seabiscuit, the wonder horse, is here.
A2: But no Red Pollard. Poor guy was riding another horse and got thrown off. His leg was crushed.
A1: Doctors say he’ll never ride again. Red, if you’re listening from your hospital bed, our thoughts are with you.
A2: Red’s old pal George Woolf is on 'Biscuit today.
A1: What an explosion out of the gates!
A2: They’re on the straightaway—Whoa, Seabiscuit stumbles!
A1: It doesn’t look good, folks. Seabiscuit is limping.
A2: I hope it’s not a torn ligament. There’s no recovering from an injury like that.
N3: Dot bursts into tears.
N1: Just then, Clarence and Pa burst in. Pa’s hand is wrapped in bandages.
Frankie: What happened?
Clarence: He was loading boxes onto the conveyer belt. His hand got caught. Sliced off three fingers.
Dot: Oh, Pa!
Clarence: We bandaged him up best we could.
N2: Frankie helps Pa shuffle over to a chair.
Dot: Will he be OK?
Clarence: I think so.
Dot: How will he work? What’ll happen to us?
Frankie: I’ll take care of you, Dot.

Scene 7
The Howard Ranch, Willits, California, 1939

N3: Red hobblies out to the stable to sit with Seabiscuit.
Red: Well, how do you like retirement?
N1: Seabiscuit whinnies and stomps.
Red: Yeah, me neither. Come on, let’s see if we can get to that tree and back.
N2: Red gingerly climbs on Seabiscuit, a look of pain on his face.
Red: ‘Biscuit, it’s time you knew my secret. I’m blind in my right eye. That’s why Rosemont beat us that time. I didn’t see him coming.
N3: Red pats Seabiscuit’s neck.
Red: You don’t mind I’m a bit broken, do you?
N1: Seabiscuit whinnies again.
N2: Red and Seabiscuit saunter into a field.

Scene 8
The migrant-worker camp, 1940

N1: Pa sits on a grungy mat in his shack. Frankie walks in, covered in dirt and sweat.
Frankie: Here’s 25 cents, Pa. I made it in the fields today.
N2: Pa keeps staring at the ground.
Frankie: How are you doing?
N3: Pa doesn’t say anything.
N1: Frankie walks out and finds Clarence.
Frankie: It’s like Pa has given up or something.
Clarence: He’s lost a lot, your Pa. You all have.
N2: Dot runs up waving a newspaper.
Dot: Seabiscuit is back!
Frankie: What?
Dot: It says here he’s racing in the Santa Anita Handicap one last time!
Frankie: For real?
Dot: There’s more. Red Pollard is riding him!
Clarence: Frankie, I think I know how we can help your pa.

Scene 9
The migrant-worker camp, a day later
Frankie: Clarence has a surprise.
Clarence: We're sending you to Santa Anita, to the race. Here's the money. Everyone in the camp pitched in.
Pa: I can't take that money from you.
Clarence: Yes, you can. You take your kids and you have the time of your lives.

Scene 10
Santa Anita Racetrack, Arcadia, California, 1940
N1: Frankie, Dot, and Pa crowd into the stands with 78,000 other fans. It's electrifying.
Frankie: I can't believe we're here!
A1: Folks, we never thought we'd see Seabiscuit again. And yet here he is, twice as old as the other horses.
A2: Across the nation, millions of Americans are tuning in to this broadcast, anxious to know Seabiscuit's fate.
A1: Do you think the 'Biscuit has a chance?
A2: Hard to say. He's a fighter, like Red Pollard. If another rider bumps Red, his leg could snap like a matchstick. But here he is riding.
A1: The horses are at the gate. And they're off!
N2: Seabiscuit bursts out of the gate, his eyes blazing. Red crouches low over his back, feeling the horse's mighty stride.
N3: Down by the track, Charles and Tom are whooping and hollering.
Charles: That horse has some spirit!
Tom: So does his rider.
A2: Coming down the stretch it's Whichee in front, with Specify and Seabiscuit behind.
Frankie and Dot: Go, 'Biscuit, go! Go! Go!
A1: Into the turn, it's Whichee by a length.
A2: They're turning for home now.
A1: Wedding Call is on the outside. Kayak II is second. Seabiscuit is third.
Pa: Go! Go! Go!
N1: Red sees an opening.
Red: Let's go, 'Biscuit!
N2: Seabiscuit gallops with all his heart.
Red (to himself): Someone's got to win, so why not me?
A2: Folks, Seabiscuit is breaking away!
A1: He's in second... now, he's out front! Seabiscuit is in the lead!
N3: Seabiscuit and Red soar across the finish.
A2: Un-be-lievable! Seabiscuit wins!
A1: And look at the clock. A track record!
N1: Across the country, people cheer at their radios. Pa throws his cap up and hol-lers.
A1: Oohhhhh! Listen to this crowd roar!
A2: Folks, this may be the greatest comeback in sports history.
N2: Down on the track, tears stream down Red’s face.
N3: Frankie looks up and notices there are tears in Pa’s eyes too—and a smile.
N1: Pa puts his arms around Frankie and Dot, and they stand together as the cheering crowd around them surges onto the track. ☢

WRITE TO WIN!

In what ways are the Orens similar to Seabiscuit and Red? Why is it so important to them for Seabiscuit to be a winner? Write your answers in a well-organized essay, using examples from the play. Send it to "Seabiscuit Contest" by May 15, 2013. Ten winners will each receive a copy of A Year Down Yonder by Richard Peck. See page 2 for details.