

*down through the last glimmer of twilight, stepping high and free,
like a cloud, a moth, a ghost in the shape of a horse*
—Elyne Mitchell



PART I

Francis



*T*he newborn foal tested his hooves.

Frost crackled as his legs slipped further apart.

Mother nudged him to try again.

Sandy was soon frisking with the other foals. They shivered when the wild brumbies whinnied on winter evenings and chased Bogong moths in the spring. Sandy grew bold in the crisp mountain air.

Summer came and eucalypts burst into flower. The horses lazed in their lush paddock swishing blowflies with their tails. As the moths flew back from their summer migration the nights became cooler. Once again frost crackled under Sandy's hooves.





Sandy's bay coat darkened and he grew to over 15 hands high. During his third winter, Sandy wore a bridle and saddle. He learned to carry a rider on his back. That felt strange at first. Sandy was skittish, but roaming beyond the home paddock was exciting. There was so much to discover.

One morning a stranger opened the gate.

'G'day,' he called. 'You must be Sandy, I'm Francis.'

The man held something sweet-smelling. Sandy nibbled. The apple was like sunshine on crunchy snow.

*F*rancis took Sandy to work at his family kiln in Tallangatta. Carting bricks was heavy work but Francis was patient. He taught Sandy to stand steady while loading and to brace his legs on steep hills.

'Well done,' Francis said as he unbuckled Sandy's harness each afternoon and gave him an apple or a carrot.

After chomping his treat, Sandy trotted into a meadow with other horses. He shook his mane and rolled onto his back, scratching the day away.

