

The Midnight Brumbies

By Brianna Spurdle

In a land-locked valley, wild and unclaimed, Wingana, a chestnut stallion, looked up. He gazed fearfully at the black cockatoos squawking above. They were retelling a rumour of the midnight brumbies. Wingana nickered a warning to his favourite young mare, a palomino called Yarrawa. She snorted an acknowledgment across the valley, alerting the rest of the herd to the danger.

That night, Wingana and his herd slept restlessly, the story of the black beasts rolling in their minds. They would have to stay in hiding until the danger had passed. All was still and quiet when, suddenly, a whinny echoed through the cliffs. Wingana was searching for the source of the sound when he noticed a black shadow blending through the trees like a ghost. The midnight brumbies and their stubborn stallion, Tambo, were trying to steal the mares.

A streak of chestnut galloped past Yarrawa. Wingana had taken off, calling for the frightened fillies to follow. The herd obeyed as he quickly galloped across the valley and out of sight.

They raced on and on, hearts beating and their tails cascading, desperately listening for sounds of a chase.

Wingana breathed in the cold mountain air, searching for any mysterious scents as the herd stumbled through the snow gums, exhausted. Finally, they came to a little valley cut into a towering cliff. There Wingana left the mares. He was determined to challenge the intruders who thought to try and steal from him. Yarrawa whinnied to Wingana as he trotted out of the valley, then silently followed.

An hour later, they came across a wide plain surrounded by dark pines. There was little grass, indicating that horses had been grazing there recently. Wingana sniffed the air and caught a scent. He left Yarrawa in the trees and walked along a rough wallaby track, his nose on the ground, occasionally stopping to sniff the air.

The trail led directly to the black beasts. Wingana melted into the bush and brushed through the leaves, inching closer to the unsuspecting fools.

Leaping from the cover of the trees and roaring with rage Wingana plunged at Tambo. Tambo screamed in surprise but quickly regrouped and lunged back. Wingana pivoted and swung his golden rump at the beast, knocking him off balance. The feisty horse righted himself and charged at his opponent in blind rage. Wingana dodged and threw all his weight at Tambo. The heavy stallion thudded to the ground but managed to scramble up before the intruder's sharp hooves hit him.

Relentless in his attack, Wingana kept plunging and dodging, lunging and ducking. In the end, Tambo lay on the rocky ground, defeated.

Snorting triumphantly, Wingana went and gathered the mares and led them back to the little valley, a relieved Yarrowa pushing against him affectionately the whole way. They reached it just as the sun was rising. And Tambo? He was never seen again.

