

As Alexandros approached the corral of bachelor stallions with its high wooden fence, he saw Boukephalas perk up his head. Then it went down again. Gradually, the stallion grazed his way to the herd edge, but as soon as Alexandros had let himself into the yard, Boukephalas turned his back and headed for the other end. Tail swishing casually, he resumed grazing at the stubbly wild grass hugging a fencepost.

Alexandros called and held out the apple he'd brought. Boukephalas ignored him. Alexandros called again, then gave up and walked towards his horse. As he drew near, Boukephalas bolted across the yard, black eye rolling. Alexandros tried again. Boukephalas retreated again. Alexandros tried a third time. Boukephalas retreated a third time. With nips and shouldering, he began to herd the other stallions away from Alexandros.

Cursing, the prince threw the bright red bridle down in the rusty dust.

He hadn't been to see Boukephalas since the court had arrived in Aigai three days ago, and Boukephalas hated to be ignored. The stable hands could always tell when Alexandros had been too busy to ride because the stallion would snap during his grooming, or get restless with a back hoof. And sometimes, in a pique, he would reach his head over the stall door to bite at passers-by. Now, seeing the horse meant to punish him for his absence. Alexandros shrugged. Two could play at this game. He turned away, meandering across the yard, eye traveling over the other stallions. He even took a bite out of the apple.

Rhoias, Hephaistion's whore of a horse, left the others to come romping up for a scratch. His nature was as sweet as a gelding's. He let anyone pet him—very different from jealous Brephas who'd followed Hephaistion about like a chick the hen but was otherwise unpredictable. Alexandros grinned at Rhoias's fancy prancing. When the sun struck the roan coat just right, it turned pomegranate pink: a bizarre color for a horse. Reaching up, he rubbed the nape of Rhoias's neck. The stallion stopped stock still, quivering all over.

Alexandros knew when Boukephalas approached. He could hear the stallion's hoof strike the dirt. He pawed like a bull when he was angry. The other stallions had backed away. Rhoias flattened his ears, then sighed loudly and wandered off. Alexandros let him go and resumed nibbling the apple, walking deliberately in the opposite direction. Boukephalas snorted and stamped again. Smiling to himself, Alexandros kept going. Boukephalas began to dance. Alexandros could see his shadow on the ground prancing sidewise and tossing up his head so his short mane slapped his neck.

Come after me, Alexandros thought at him.

Abruptly, Boukephalas lowered his head and charged. Alexandros ignored him until he was right *there*, spraying orange dirt on the backs of Alexandros's legs. Laughing, the prince spun to grab a handful of mane with his free hand. Boukephalas stopped on the instant, snorting and tossing his head again. Then he snaked out his long neck, whiffling hopefully.

"You want the apple, don't you? Here." He balanced the fruit on the flat of his palm, offering it up. Delicately, Boukephalas took the half-eaten apple and crunched happily. He turned his back end to bump up against Alexandros. It put a barrier of flesh between his master the Rhoias, who stood blinking calmly some feet away. Alexandros laughed again and slapped his withers. "Jealous." What'll you do when you're too old to carry me into battle and I have to ride another horse?" Boukephalas twisted his head and trained an eye on him. Then—for all the world as if he'd understood—he went down on a knee, offering Alexandros an easy mount. Alexandros ruffled his mane and swung astride.

....Scene continues with Alexandros riding out to meet Antipatros's delegation returning from Delphi—the opening of the final chapter in Rise.

Why this was cut: chiefly in an attempt to reduce wordcount. It's fun for horse buffs but doesn't significantly advance the plot.