



**WHEN
LIGHTNING**
Strikes

by Emily Johnsen

JAN TAYLOR ©

An avid equestrian since childhood, it is only natural for Jan Taylor to draw artistic inspiration from her relationships with horses. They have played an important role in her life and are inevitably depicted in her art. Much like the cowboys and Native Americans she romanticized in her early work, Taylor perceives animals as companions and guardians rather than simply as pets. She feels honored to be with them, believing that they can teach us quite a bit about ourselves. The artist learned, firsthand, how influential they could be when turning to her animals during difficult times in her past. Grateful for the unconditional love they provide, she claims horses are her very reason for being, and it is her passion for these creatures that has directed her life's work.

Her ability to empathize with human and animal relationships led to a successful career creating commissioned pet portraits in her chosen hometown of Cave Creek, Arizona. She began each project with a visit to the client, during which she would observe and photograph their pet. The reference images often provided insight into the animal's personality. Taylor could capture their unique character by illuminating the expressive qualities the owner had come to love. The detail she added to the eyes brought the artwork to life reflecting the inner spirit of the animal. Many clients were moved to tears upon seeing the finished painting, particularly if their pet was no longer with them. Seeing the joy she brought to others, Taylor knew this was what she was meant to do.



After twenty years of practicing her art in a community she adored, Taylor made the difficult decision to move to be with her childhood sweetheart. In pursuit of the storybook romance that many seek and few find, she took a leap of faith returning to Denver, Colorado, where she was born and raised, to begin the next phase of her life. Once she settled into her new home on the ranch where she bred Welsh Cob horses, Taylor worked to rebuild her art career. Even though she gained national recognition for her work, she was never as happy as she had been in Arizona, and she soon found that her life was about to take a turn for the worst.

With little warning, Taylor found herself amid a series of tragic circumstances, suffering through a dissolving marriage, the loss of her parents and the financial devastation of the subprime mortgage crisis. Experiencing mounting health problems, all the while, it took everything she had to keep her life together, but



Opposite left: "Lightning"
Above and left: Commissioned
Below: "Red Scarf" from Taylor

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