

A white unicorn with a flowing mane and tail is running across a vibrant, green and yellow field. The scene is filled with numerous small, white, star-like sparkles, creating a magical atmosphere. The background shows rolling hills under a soft, glowing light.

My Magical Pony

**Secret
Whispers**

By the million-selling author

Jenny Oldfield

*My
Magical
Pony*

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Secret Whispers

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My Magical Pony

Secret Whispers

By Jenny Oldfield

Illustrated by Gillian Martin



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First published in Great Britain in 2007
by Hodder Children's Books

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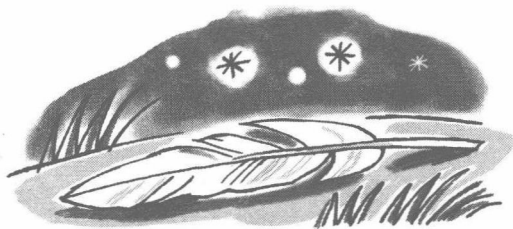
A Catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN-13: 978 0 340 93245 2

Printed in the UK by CPI Bookmarque, Croydon, CR0 4TD

The paper and board used in this paperback by Hodder Children's Books are natural recyclable products made from wood grown in sustainable forests. The manufacturing processes conform to the environmental regulations of the country of origin.

Hodder Children's Books
a division of Hachette Children's Books
338 Euston Road, London NW1 3BH
An Hachette Livre UK company

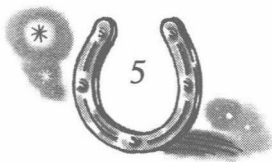


Chapter One

Krista sang to herself as she mucked out Comanche's stable.

"This is my friend, Lee Harris," Rob was saying to Jo Weston, the owner of the stable yard. Rob and Lee had driven up to Hartfell on a late December afternoon to take a look around the stables. "Lee's from New Zealand. He's travelling round Europe for six months and staying with me over New Year."

"Pleased to meet you, Lee." Jo shook hands then called for Krista to join them. "Come and say hello. This is Lee. Lee, meet Krista."



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She does all the hard work around here."

Quickly Krista wiped her hands down the sides of her jeans. "Not really," she grinned, shaking hands with Rob's young, fair-haired friend.

"Yes, really!" Jo insisted with a broad smile. "Hey, Krista, show Lee around while I make coffee!"

"What would you like to see?" Krista asked. She felt shy with new people, but Lee seemed laid-back and not at all scary.

"Show me the horses," he replied, as Rob disappeared with Jo into the tack room.

"We're a riding school and trekking centre so we've got mostly ponies," she explained, taking Lee to the winter paddocks. "But this



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is Apollo. He's a thoroughbred. Jo does three-day eventing with him. And this is Scottie."

"Cool," Lee murmured, looking the two horses up and down.



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Apollo pulled a chunk of hay from his net and chewed noisily while Scottie, the ex-racehorse, snorted into the cold air and stamped his feet on the frozen ground.

"Scottie looks like he comes from a pretty good blood-line," Lee noted.

Krista nodded then led him to the next paddock. "Do you know about horses?"

"Some," Lee told her, stopping to admire Misty, Shandy and Drifter. "I like this dark bay."

"Yeah, that's Shandy. She's the friendliest pony around! Jo puts beginner riders on her because she never ever acts up. Hey, Shandy!" Krista reached over the fence to scratch the pony's nose. "Now Drifter's different – he's a bit of a handful, aren't you, boy?"



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Barging Shandy out of the way, the chestnut pony demanded attention. Lee came up to the fence and stroked him. "I can see you love these guys, Krista."

"Totally!" she agreed. "They're all different, but I love them equally! I come here every day during the school holidays – Jo couldn't get rid of me even if she tried!"

Shandy, Drifter, Misty. Comanche the chunky piebald, Duchess the chestnut mare, with her foal, Frankie. One by one Krista introduced Lee to the ponies of Hartfell.

Then Jo called across the yard to say that coffee was ready.

"OK, let's tear ourselves away," Lee grinned. He led the way to the tack room,



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firing questions at Krista as they rejoined Jo and Rob. "How long have you been coming here? ... Where do you live? ... Do you own one of the ponies?"

"Since I was five ... I live at High Point Farm ... No, worse luck!" Krista replied. *I like him*, she thought, taking her mug of hot chocolate and perching on a bench overlooking the yard. She glanced sideways



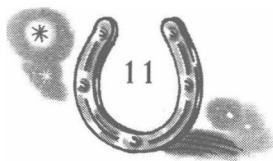
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at Lee, who was leaning against the doorpost, chatting quietly with Rob and Jo. *He's nice. And I can tell Jo likes him too. Yeah, he's definitely cool. I hope Rob brings him up to Hartfell again.*

"OK, Krista, where do you keep the hoof picks?" Lee asked.

He'd visited the stables every day that week, sometimes with Rob, sometimes alone. He'd driven up from Whitton in all weathers, along the narrow, icy lanes and through the freezing fog. And as soon as he arrived he would offer a hand to muck out, groom or clean tack.

"Hanging beside the tack room door," Krista replied. "On your left as you go in."



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Lee strolled across the yard, whistling softly. He wore jeans, a black padded jacket and a baseball cap over his fair curls.

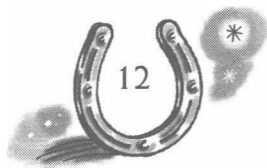
"Can you believe him?" Jo muttered as she led Apollo into his stable. "Don't you think he's too good to be true?"

"He's cool," Krista laughed at Jo, who wasn't easily impressed. "Why do you want the hoof pick?" she asked Lee as he came back.

"I need to take it away with me. There's a little Arab pony stabled at a smallholding near Rob's place. I saw she was lame when I drove by her field earlier today, so I thought I'd take a look at her feet."

Krista frowned. "Does her owner know?"

"Her owner – a guy called Ian Charlton,



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apparently – left her home alone over Christmas and New Year. A neighbour called Jim is looking after her, but Jim doesn't seem to know the first thing about horses. He said it was OK for me to take a look."

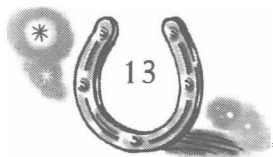
"That's good of you," Jo told him.

"Can I come with you?" Krista asked quickly. She'd finished her jobs for the afternoon and was due to meet her dad in town at six o'clock.

"Sure," Lee agreed. "But I've got to warn you that this pony isn't a pretty sight."

"All the more reason!" Krista told him, eager to find out how she might help.

So she and Lee said goodbye to Jo and drove down the lane, chatting as they went.



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"What did you do in New Zealand?"

Krista asked.

"This and that," Lee replied.

"Did you live in the town or the country?"

"My family lives on a farm on North Island."

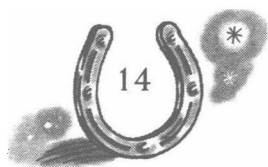
"So did you work with horses?"

"Now and then."

Krista shrugged then smiled. Getting facts out of Lee was tough work. In any case, he had pulled off the road, down a rough track towards a small stone house with a few shabby outbuildings.

"Is this the place?" Krista asked.

Lee nodded and got out of the car in the gathering dusk. She followed him to the

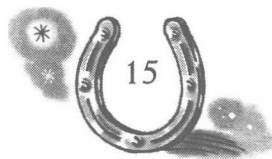


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nearest outbuilding then backed off as the stench hit her. It was a strong smell of soiled straw, as if the creature inside was forced to live in its own filth.

"Remember, I told you it wasn't pretty," Lee muttered. "It looks to me like Jim hasn't mucked this place out in more than a week. And he was leaving the pony out in the field all day until I told him the poor little devil would freeze to death."

"Oh!" Entering the dilapidated stable, Krista gasped. In the gloom she made out a dark shape with matted mane and tail, wearing a tattered, mud-caked rug. "You poor thing!" she cried. She turned to Lee. "What's her name?"



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"Jim couldn't tell me that. In fact, he couldn't tell me anything at all, except that Mr Charlton will be back first thing tomorrow."

"She's shivering!" Krista said. "Where's her feed bucket? What does she have to eat?"

"Hay, I guess." Lee inspected the empty

