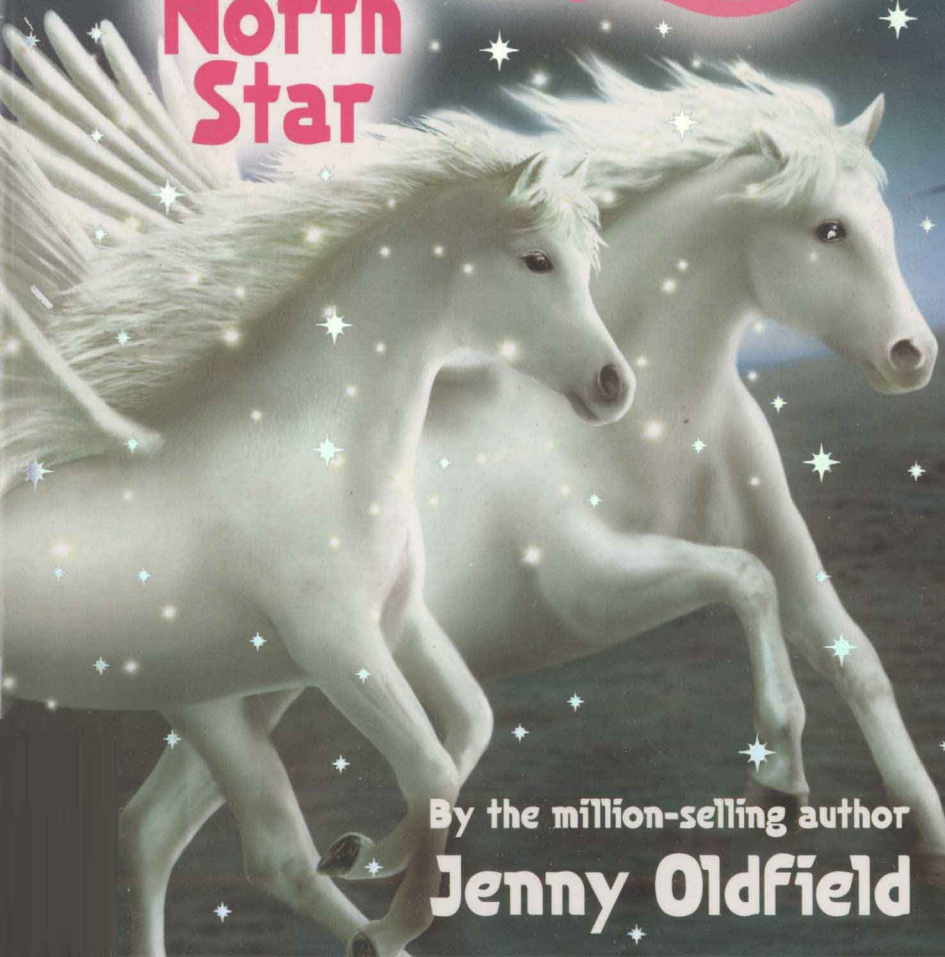


My Magical Pony

North
Star



By the million-selling author
Jenny Oldfield

工业学院图书馆
藏书章

My Magical Pony

North Star

By Jenny Oldfield

Illustrated by Gillian Martin



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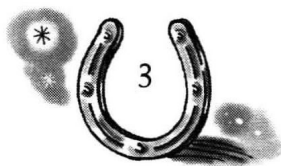
Chapter One

"Let me out of here!" Krista muttered. She was in town on a cold December morning, buying presents for her friends, Janey, Alice and Carrie.

Crowds of anxious shoppers elbowed each other out of the way.

"Watch where you're going!" an old lady cried, barging into Krista with her shopping bags.

A man on a bike mounted the pavement and whizzed across her path. A crowd of kids blocked her way.



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"Yeah, give me ponies and stables any day!"

Krista sighed. She stopped in a doorway to peer inside her plastic bag and check the presents she'd managed to buy so far – hair accessory for Alice, sparkly address book for Janey, photo frame for Carrie. *Enough for today*, she thought. *Now at last I can get out of this place!*

"Hey, Krista!" a voice said from across the busy street, and Alice Henderson made her way towards her.

Quickly Krista closed up her plastic bag, wondering if the hair thingy she'd just bought would suit Alice's long, reddish-brown hair. "Hi, I thought you'd be up at Hartfell," she said.

"I will be – soon!" Alice held up her own bag. "Christmas pressies – almost finished!"



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"Me too. I promised Jo I'd help clean tack this afternoon."

"But no rides today. I rang her. The ground's too icy."

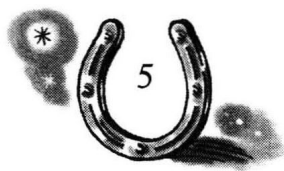
Krista nodded. "I know."

"I offered to go up and do the tack too."

"Cool!" Krista grinned. "How are you getting up there? Do you want a lift?"

"That'd be great, thanks." Alice quickly phoned her mum to say she was driving up to the stables with Krista and her dad, then the two girls made their way through the crowds to the car park on the seafront.

"Hey, girls, hop in!" Krista's dad spotted them and opened his car door. "I take it you want me to run you straight up to the stables?"



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"Please!" Alice sighed, settling happily back into her seat.

"Cool, Dad!" Krista looked ahead as the car crawled out into the traffic. Her Christmas shopping duty was done. Now she had the rest of the day ahead to enjoy the ponies at Hartfell!

"Though we have racing here today at Worcester, it has just been confirmed that there will be no meeting at York, and stewards are inspecting the course at Cheltenham." A commentator on TV explained how the freezing weather had affected the day's sport.

"It looks like ice and snow are pretty



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widespread," Jo Weston remarked, walking into the tack room where Krista and Alice were busily polishing bits and stirrups to background noise from the telly. "At least we're not the only ones to suffer!"



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Saturday was normally a busy time at Hartfell, when riders hacked out into the beautiful moorland countryside or down to Whitton Sands, or else took lessons from Jo in the arena. But today the frozen ground and icy surfaces had led to everything being cancelled.

"Yeah, and it means we can catch up here," Krista said. She stood back to admire the rows of shining metal. "I noticed Misty was missing a front shoe when I brushed her earlier. I added her to the list."

"Good. The blacksmith's due on Tuesday." Jo glanced up at the TV, perched on a wide shelf high on the wall. "Look at that chestnut mare!" she said with an admiring whistle.

Krista and Alice looked up at the screen.



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They were showing the runners on parade in the paddock before the next race. The chestnut which Jo had picked out was sleek and gleaming, groomed to perfection. And she stepped out on slender legs, prancing when her jockey mounted her then sidestepping impatiently towards the opening on to the racecourse.

"And this is the three to one favourite, Lady Madonna," the commentator said. "Trained by Martin Cornwell, ridden by Joe Miller."

"Gorgeous!" Alice sighed.

"And look at the grey!" Krista said. She'd spotted a runner called Night Watchman, also trained by Martin Cornwell, and picked him



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as her own favourite because he looked like Apollo, Jo's own thoroughbred.

"I like the dark bay." Alice chose a horse called Don Juan, whose jockey wore a bright scarlet silk shirt and a black and white spotted hat.

For a few minutes Jo, Krista and Alice forgot the afternoon chores and watched the runners gather at the start. The ten horses bunched together, their jockeys holding them back until the starter gave them their orders, and then they were off, thundering down the track until they came to the first jump.

"Come on, Lady Madonna!" Jo called as her horse cleared the fence.

Krista saw Night Watchman fall a little



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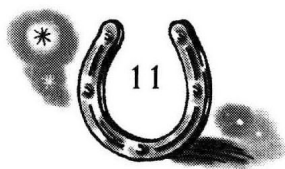
behind then catch up with the rest. Alice silently urged on Don Juan.

They sprinted on and jumped again, then again. Some slower horses began to trail behind.

Don Juan took the lead after the sixth fence, with Lady Madonna second and Night Watchman back in fifth, still in with the leading bunch.

"My horse is going to win!" Alice cried, jumping up and down. "Come on, Don Juan!"

Krista's eyes were glued to the screen, her heart in her mouth at the idea that any one of the runners might fall at the next fence.



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But all were clear and now there was only one fence to go. Don Juan was slowing down, Lady Madonna was overtaking him. The crowd roared her on.

Krista put her hand to her eyes and watched through the gaps in her fingers. Now she didn't care who won, as long as all the horses got back safely. Night Watchman flew over it and galloped for the finish line.

"And it's Lady Madonna, the favourite, winning by two lengths, with Don Juan in second place and Night Watchman coming in a very good third!" The commentator gave the results in a fast, high-pitched voice as the horses crossed the line. Sweat rose from them in white clouds. The winning



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jockey, perched on his tiny saddle, leaned forward to pat his horse's neck.

"Phew!" Krista was glad the race was over. She loved the graceful racehorses, but hated to see them hit with whips and raced to their limits. "I'm off to make up the evening feeds," she told Jo. "Shall I give Misty and Drifter extra grass nuts?"

The stable owner nodded. "Alice, you can leave off here too and help me to bring the ponies in from the paddocks. It's going to be dark early tonight."

So the three of them left the tack room and braved the cold air, Krista heading for the feed bins, while Jo and Alice took head-collars out to the ponies. As she



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scooped feed, Krista hummed happily.

Those thoroughbreds are brilliant athletes, she said to herself, but they're nowhere near as cool as Misty and Drifter – or any of the ponies here at Hartfell, for that matter!

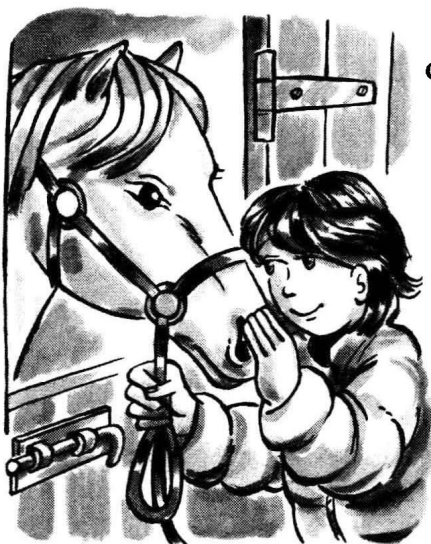
She laughed at herself, hearing the ponies' hooves clip slowly across the yard. "OK, so I'm biased!" she said out loud.

Led by Alice, Misty came and poked her nose through the doorway of the feed room.

"She smells supper!"

Alice laughed.

Krista left what she was doing and



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went to stroke the strawberry roan pony's nose. "Are you hungry?" she murmured.

"Do you want some yummy grass nuts?"

Misty blew warm air over Krista's hand. Then she turned her head to butt Alice's shoulder.

"Manners!" Alice warned, pushing her away then leading her on to her stable.

Krista went back to scooping. She breathed in the strong, sweet smell of the ponies' feed. *And those racehorses were definitely not in the same league as Shining Star!* she thought. For there was no horse or pony in the world to equal her magical pony, who lived far away in Galishe and was her very own secret friend.

Krista stopped, her feed scoop in midair,



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eyes shining as she thought of the wonderful creature who arrived in this world in a cloud of silver light, his proud neck arched, his white mane flowing. Shining Star would call her to the magic spot on the cliff path overlooking Whitton Bay. He would appear in the sky and land at her side, folding his great wings, telling her that he needed her help. Krista would climb on to his back and they would fly to the rescue of ponies trapped by rising tides or children lost on the dark sands.

No, none of those horses on TV were anywhere near as cool as Shining Star! she thought with a smile, bending to pick up a bucket of grass nuts and carrying it out into the yard.