

TWIST OF FATE

THE MIRACLE COLT AND HIS FRIENDS



CHAPTER TWO

BY CHRIS STUCKENSCHNEIDER

The big guy on the block is Stan the Thoroughbred. He strikes an impressive figure when he circles the round pen, his bay coat shining, head arched, tail streaming. The gelding is 17 hands, making him tower over the other horses at Longmeadow Rescue Ranch. Stan is 20 years old, but he's got the pep of a spring colt. Climb on his back and he kicks it into high gear.

Stan has a tattoo on the inside of his top lip. Most Thoroughbreds bear this identifying mark if there's a chance they'll race. Because of the tattoo, the folks at Longmeadow know a bit about his history.

When it comes to Mama and the rest of the horses from the accident, the staff has to fill in the blanks, guess at their ages and backgrounds. If humans could only talk horse, they'd hear tales. The stables are full of them; Snortin' Norton will attest to that. Stan's name might be simple now, but in his previous life he bore a title as regal as his heritage—Prince Conley. The handsome steed was born in April like I was, but that's where our similarities end. I'm a commoner, but Stan's a blueblood from Lexington, Ky., Bluegrass country, where horseracing is king.

Though Stan's a Thoroughbred, he never raced. Of the thousands of horses born in

Kentucky, few make it to the track. Stan never got the chance to strut his stuff. In the late 1980s he was sold to a man in Arizona. The owner fell on hard times and doesn't remember Stan, so the rest of Stan's history is a question mark with a tail longer than an Arabian's.

Stan was a bag of bones when he was brought to Longmeadow after the accident. Now Stan's got another problem—recently his caretakers at the ranch had to put him on a diet. Stan's gained 300 pounds, and was getting chubbo. He's a real "food hound," the staff says.

Because he's so tall, when the hay wagon is parked near the arena, Stan can stretch his neck like a giraffe and pull off enough hay to supplement his daily allowance. But Stan's favorite treat remains grain. He knows the staff, and when he sees them coming he shakes his head like a bobble doll, knowing din-din's on the way.

Horses have personalities like people, folks at Longmeadow say. (Duh, anyone with four legs knows that.) While I'm a pampered pet at the ranch, I share the limelight with Stan. Everyone looks up to him and admires the way he's come back from the accident. His legs have healed and he doesn't

have the jitters. Stan could be arrogant because of his lineage, but that's not in his nature. He never wore a horseshoe bower of flowers in the winner's circle, but Stan's won everyone's heart at Longmeadow.

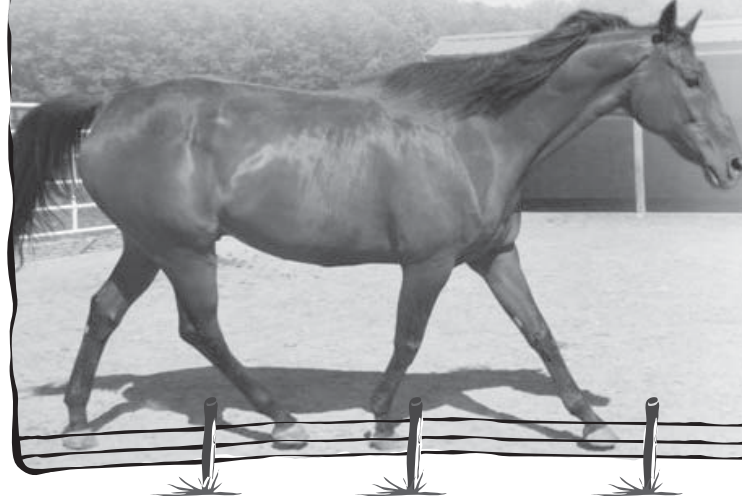
Long on charm with a unique sense of humor—that's Stan. He's a trickster. If anyone tries to halter him, he raises his head to the rafters. He's a gadget guy, too. Stan fiddles with the latch on his stall door and can easily gain access to his friends in the barn.

Because Stan's an escape artist, the staff has to keep the top part of his stall door closed. It doesn't bother Stan; he spends his days gazing out the window that overlooks another barn and field. Or he rubs noses with Bazonka Donk, who lives in the stall next to him.

Bazonka Donk and Stan are like Mutt and Jeff, polar opposites. Until recently, they enjoyed sharing space in the arena, but Stan can be annoying, like a burr under your saddle. They got cranky with each other, and Donk the hinny had to go to "time out."

What's a hinny, you're wondering? Tune in next chapter, and meet a long ear you won't soon forget.

STAN



In 2006, a truck carrying horses bound for a meat-packing plant overturned in Missouri. Twenty-six animals survived and were taken to a rescue ranch for treatment and care. One of the horses was pregnant and miraculously delivered a colt the following spring. This story is told from the colt's perspective. Learn more about these animals today at www.longmeadowrescueranch.org.

Illustrations by Tony Rainey; photographs by Jeanne Miller Wood. Produced by the Missouri Press Foundation. © 2007.