

TWIST OF FATE

THE MIRACLE COLT AND HIS FRIENDS



CHAPTER FIVE

BY CHRIS STUCKENSCHNEIDER

D.D. is a horse of a different color these days. The mare's more confident after a couple of months with Lucinda, a trainer who has a place down the road from Longmeadow. Actually, D.D. is a horse of a couple of colors, an Appaloosa.

Snortin' Norton schooled me on Appaloosas. He's a wise pig with a virtual sty-full of knowledge. Norton said D.D. can thank the Nez Perce Indians for starting the Appaloosa breed. The Northwest tribe loved its horses and bred Appaloosas, which are known for being smart and having plenty of gusto for the long haul.

Appaloosas are stock horses. Like quarter horses, they're used on ranches. Appaloosas have unique colored coats. They're called "pied" because they look like they've had a pie thrown at them. The horses can have a smattering of white spots on a dark-colored coat, or a blanket of color on their rumps, overlaid with spots of another shade.

D.D. is chocolate with dots of white, like a brownie sprinkled with powdered sugar. Up close, you can see mottling on her nose, another characteristic of an Appaloosa, as is an area of white around their eyes.

D.D., LUCINDA AND JEREMY



Appaloosas also have striped hooves, but don't misunderstand, they're not zebra tootsies. That would be way wild.

The reason D.D. stayed at Lucinda's is because the mare had bad habits—taking care of them would make her more adoptable. D.D. is sweet, likes to be petted, accepted a saddle, but hated having a bit in her mouth. Her biggest issue was that she lacked confidence.

If something spooked D.D., she'd get too close to humans because she didn't want to be alone. D.D. didn't have a realistic idea about her size—thought she was a lap-sitter like a Maltese. Oh please, even I know better than that. When horses get in people's space, it makes folks nervous, Snortin' Norton says. And with good reason — D.D. might knock a person for a loop, and the only loops people like are the fancy ones in lassos thrown by cowboys at rodeos.

After being tutored by Lucinda, there's a noticeable change in D.D. Just ask Donk. He may be cantankerous at times, but he's D.D.'s boyfriend. When the mare got back from training, he used his "outside voice" to welcome her home.

Horses need to be taught and brought up right, like children, Lucinda says. If they miss out when they're colts, if their owner gives up on them, they'll carry bad habits

into adulthood.

Horses who still need self-improvement are often sold and can end up going to a slaughterhouse, which was nearly D.D.'s destiny.

Following the accident, D.D. had injuries that couldn't be treated on the scene, so she, like 17 of the other horses in the wreck, went to area veterinary hospitals. The accident threw D.D. a curve ball—already a scaredy-cat, she was afraid of her own shadow.

Now that D.D.'s more sure of herself, she's muscled up and is looking good. The mare's not as shy, and pays better attention. That's because Lucinda was consistent with her commands, using a firm but gentle hand, speaking in a tone that showed D.D. she meant business, but using people words that showed the mare Lucinda cared.

Diva D.D. came back to Longmeadow in Lucinda's horse trailer, but the work isn't ever over for the horse trainer. Lucinda's job continues. She drops one horse off at Longmeadow and picks up another.

In the next chapter, you'll meet a horse from the accident that's Longmeadow's biggest success story. Frankie Blue Eyes has a home and is giving back to a group that rescues large animals; she has what all of us want, an owner who loves her and a purpose in life.

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 longmeadowrescueranch.org.

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